

# The Secrets of Being Happy

## *The Technology of Hope, Health, and Harmony*

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THE SECRETS OF BEING HAPPY

The technology of hope, health, and harmony

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## **Introduction to The Secrets of Being Happy**

The technology of hope, health, and harmony

By Richard Bandler and Garner Thomson

# **INTRODUCTION**

We are poised on the brink of one of the most critical times in the history of our species. On the one hand, we've made extraordinary technological advances that even a decade ago would have seemed unimaginable. On the other hand, new issues, such as mass poverty, climate change and growing chronic illnesses, threaten the prosperous and harmonious life we all hoped we'd be living in the New Millennium. Many of the promises made by science, psychiatry, politics, the pharmaceutical industry and big business have failed to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to everyone on the planet. The moment has come when we need to look elsewhere for the resources to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

The decisions we make now and the actions we take will affect the future, not only for us, but for our descendants for all time. The possibilities are simple and stark: either we make a quantum leap to a new level of organization and efficiency, or we descend deeper into chaos and despair.

While we are still dependant on technology and many of the suppliers of goods and services (not all of us can plow up our back yards and grow all the food we need), the need is greater than ever before to take responsibility for our own thoughts, feelings, behaviors and beliefs. If we succeed, we could make a massive leap forward in our own evolution.

Imagine for a moment that someone takes you into a huge room, packed with the most complex technology you'd ever seen and offers to show you how to operate the system so that you can

instantly bounce your attitude from one of negativity and doubt to an attitude of optimism, cheerfulness and hope. How radically would your life change if you could switch, at will, from living life down to living life up? What would you be capable of achieving if you had a system guaranteed to upgrade your health and well-being, outlook and expectations? Is this something you'd be interested in? If so, read on ...

## **NLP: THE MASTER TOOL**

During the 1970s two young researchers, Richard Bandler and John Grinder became curious about the failure of most psychologists to help their patients make real changes in their lives. Instead of digging even deeper into the possible causes of human problems, they looked for and found a scattering of therapists throughout the country who, unlike their more orthodox colleagues, were consistently and sometimes dramatically successful.

By studying (modeling) in minute detail the communication styles of each therapist, they discovered that these professionals used certain patterns combining verbal and non-verbal communication. These combinations appeared to have a profoundly positive effect on their clients. Interestingly, the therapists they were studying shared many of these (often unconscious) patterns, even though their approaches were very different on the surface.

Curious as to whether it was this or some other unidentified quality shared by these elite therapists that triggered such dramatic change, the young scientists refined and tested these patterns on a large number of volunteers. The results were almost magical and their impact produced dramatic shifts within the human potential movement of the time. As understanding and experimentation grew, these discoveries began to challenge some of the most dearly held psychological 'truths' (such as change is difficult and takes time). In a very short time, these findings blossomed into what is arguably one of the simplest and most effective self-help fields of our time.

The new methodology became known as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), a reference to three key driving processes of human action and interaction: neurology, communication and behavior.

Stated simply, the way you communicate with yourself and others (**Linguistic**) affects your nervous system at all levels (**Neuro**). This can be used to set up patterns of behavior (**Programming**). The more effective your internal processing, the more rewarding and enjoyable your life can be.



Understanding the mechanics of NLP provides students of excellence in all fields of human endeavor with the formulas necessary to create new and exciting methods of change. NLP can be thought of as 'The Art and Science of Excellence', or 'The Study of Subjective Experience'. However you describe it, NLP is a master tool for creating other tools designed to achieve specific outcomes. Most importantly these tools can be used by anyone. They are not reserved for consultants, coaches, therapists and other leaders of change. They are also intended for *you*. The good news is you already have the room full of the technological wizardry we spoke about earlier. It is called your brain. NLP combined with this book provides you with the key to using your brain easily and affectively.

## **THE SPECIALIST NEURON**

Your neurons are capable of remarkable specialization. Even more importantly, they learn by your input and experience to respond in a specific way. UCLA Researcher Dr Itzhak Fried has demonstrated how a single neuron in the left posterior hippocampus of one subject fired in response to all pictures of *Friends* actress Jennifer Aniston, but not to other famous and non-famous faces, landmarks, animals or objects, nor to pictures of Aniston with actor Brad Pitt. Pictures of actress Halle Berry activated a neuron in different part of another subject's brain. That brain also responded to caricatures of the actress, pictures of her in the lead role of the film *Catwoman*, and a sequence of letters spelling out her name.

This revelation that you have a specialized neuron for each of the billions of people, places and things you have acquired during your life is almost beyond comprehension. It is clear, though, that you already have enough highly specialized hardware to help you get almost anything you set out to achieve, become or do.

The reason you still have problems, shortfalls, regrets and failures in your life is that you have been using these resources haphazardly. In all probability, you have been unaware that you can take charge of your brain's processing power and change its outcomes. As an analogy, you have been inadvertently using outdated software. This outdated software forms the beliefs and behaviors that keep giving you results you do not want. Change the results by changing the software.

If you are interested in changing your life and are prepared to invest some time and energy in following the advice and instructions that follow, you'll not only come to understand the principles

behind this book, but you will also be able to install and put into practice your own customized system to free yourself from negative beliefs and behaviors.

How would your life improve if you were able to:

- Think clearly and effectively;
- Discover how to redirect your life in the direction you want to go;
- Design new, useful and positive states and experiences;
- Improve your health and well-being;
- Install new information quickly and easily;
- Optimize all aspects of your working, recreational and personal life?

This is an idea whose time has come, and not a moment too soon. Consider the title of Richard Fariña's 1966 novel *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me*

This gloomy phrase suddenly appeared scrawled on walls from the Haight-Ashbury to Hong Kong and even landed in popular hit by The Doors in 1971 (with a few choice extra words added in). It seemed to resonate with millions of young people who discovered that tuning in, turning on and dropping out hadn't brought them the peace, freedom and enlightenment that they'd been promised.

More than 40-years later, the situation hasn't changed much. People might want more material things, but the sense of disappointment appears as great. The brief satisfaction that comes with a new car, a hike in wages or a new love-affair may look like 'up' for some people. At least for a little while until the inevitable realization that this is not 'it'. Frustrated, they set out to find the next hit that defines 'it'.

When things do not work out the way these people want, the response is often to look around for things and people to blame:

"I haven't had the breaks";

“People don’t take me seriously”;

“It’s my upbringing”;

“It’s my low self-esteem”.

And then there is the all-time favorite...

“The times are just getting worse”.

It is true we are living in difficult times. Whether you are reading that last sentence the day after this book is published or 20 years on, it is still going to be true. Life is full of problems for many people, most of the time. And many of the people battling with their challenges are spiraling down even deeper into sadness, fear and despair by asking the wrong questions and running after the wrong things. The time has come not only to change your ways, but to change your mind ... *for good*.

“Well, it might be okay for some people, but it is not that simple for me,” you might say. “But I’ve got serious problems and they are not going to go away.”

Of course you have problems! The cause is simple: *You got born*.

Think for a moment about what it means to be a baby starting life on this particular planet at this, or any other time. The first thing you have to do is survive. The tools at your disposal are primitive. You have no claws or teeth to defend yourself against predators, no pelt to keep you from the cold. You have no means of finding food (and, even if you had it, you are too puny and uncoordinated to get it into your mouth). Your chief means of survival is your ability to communicate.

You cry when you are hungry or wet; you burble and coo when you are feeling safe. From birth, you respond to a friendly face with smiles and gurgles and to an angry one with screams and cries. If you are lucky enough to be in the care of attentive, loving adults, they will respond to these cues with a primal cascade of neurochemicals, including one called oxytocin. Oxytocin provides a feeling of well-being and compels those experiencing it to reward you with food, love and care.

## **WHY SOME FEARS ARE HARDWIRED**

The fears you are born with are few. As far as we know, humans are born with only two: the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. This makes perfect evolutionary sense. As your mother (or, your ancestors' mothers) swung through the branches, you needed to have in you a hardwired impulse to hang on, and a healthy fear of letting go; as your forebears made their way through alien territory, they needed to respond quickly and emphatically to unexpected noise.

That said, all your other fears are learned. You learned to be afraid of being abandoned. You learned to fear authority. You learned your phobias. You learned to fear what other people are thinking about you, or of flying or riding in an elevator. This is important and bears repeating: *fear and all its associated problems is a learned response.*

In principle, this is a good thing. The part of your brain that contains the mechanisms for both memory and fear still operates today. Its intention is highly positive. This part of your brain is in charge of noticing and remembering anything that might threaten your safety. Rightly or wrongly, it bookmarks anything it regards as dangerous and it makes sure you know when you are approaching anything that resembles this "predator" by creating the psycho-physiological response we know as fear.

Today, fortunately, most of us do not face a daily threat to life and limb like our ancestors did in centuries past. This ability to learn fear is one of the things that kept us alive. Whenever you went out into the savannah to find something to eat, you increased the likelihood of returning home if you remembered how that big, furry thing with shiny teeth ate your cousin Og. Through that memory and association, you became very, very afraid.

## **FEAR AND SURVIVAL**

Fear increases your chances of survival by preparing your body and mind for action, something known as the fight or flight response. Fear activates your ability to learn to identify patterns and thus prevents you from placing yourself in the same kind of situation again.

That 'fight or flight' response is still alive and well and functioning on a day-to-day, minute-to-minute basis. You need it in certain circumstances. For example, if you are crossing a road and a car is coming at you, that is not a time to use your education or your intellect. That mechanism

doesn't calculate the speed of the car and divide it by the estimated distance from where you are to the safety of the sidewalk. Almost at the speed of light, the blood is shunted away from your viscera (your internal organs) and into your muscles to prepare them for a burst of action. At the same time, most activity is hijacked away from the frontal cortex, (the rational part of your brain), and into the hindbrain, that more primitive seat of memory, emotion and survival.

You become strong in a crisis, sometimes far stronger than you have ever been before. However, you also become dumb. Without the moderating influence of the forebrain, your responses are likely to be reptilian. If something stands in the way of your survival and you cannot escape or defeat it, something has to give. As society becomes more civilized, you try to suppress such responses as inappropriate and even pathological. If suppression doesn't work, you end up going to a doctor or a therapist with anger issues, anxiety disorders, depression, or some of these conditions' newer and trendier siblings: social phobia, low self-esteem or lack of self-worth.

Predictably these processes are not always as effective we would like. The brain makes mistakes, not because it is stupid, but, as we'll explain later, because it needs to take shortcuts in order to be able to function at all.

The real challenges we face at this point of our development are based on the fact that while we still need this fight or flight response, the news hasn't quite filtered down to the hindbrain. It doesn't always recognize that a run-in with the boss or a scowling partner is not the same thing as coming face-to-face with a hungry tiger or some other life-or-death threat.

The complex time in which we live with its challenges and demands of work and family coupled with the traumas that come at us from left field, can keep your "inner reptile" in a hyper-vigilant state. For short periods of time, this is good. Your physical body and your immune system sharpen up for action. If you can cope with the perceived attack, you grow physically and mentally. If the challenge continues without resolution, it becomes chronic. Chronic stress becomes toxic and your system, that amazing combination of mind, body and spirit, starts to degenerate.

To put it simply, when the demands we face (or think we face) exceed our perceived ability to cope, we experience stress.

## **THE BODY IN FEAR**

The point at which people seek help (going to see a doctor or a therapist) tends to occur when their struggles overwhelm the ability of their mind and body to respond. Much like when a computer crashes or freezes from too much or inaccurate input, your mind and body objects in a similar fashion by developing symptoms. These symptoms may be behavioral or physical or a combination of both. Coping with modern day stressors seldom involves physical activity, so the physiological arousal we experience becomes diverted into psychosomatic disorders. Even if you do not have the means of communicating what is happening to you, your body does.

Symptoms start with a positive intention. They are designed to grab your attention, shake you up and say, "Hey! Something's wrong. Pay attention now!"

For more than a hundred years, priests, psychologists and physicians have tried to fix people by applying treatments ranging from exorcism, incarceration, ice water baths and shock treatment to allopathic approaches including deep analysis, cognitive therapies and drugs. Results thus far have been disappointing. These approaches continue to focus on deficit and repair (critics of the allopathic approach maintain it is all simply aimed at anesthetizing the patient to the symptom). Rarely is the focus of treatment on developing health, happiness and well-being.

## **SALUTOGENIC VERSUS PATHOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

This is the result of asking the wrong question. Researchers in physical medicine and psychology continually approach the problem by asking, "How do people get sick or stuck?" The theory is that if only we can look deeply enough into the details of a problem, we will magically discover the secret of its cure. If it is not possession by a ghost or infection by a germ, maybe it is the result of a faulty gene. This is a reductionist, pathogenic approach. Even though it has its uses, it seldom results in cure. Why? ***The stumbling block is the belief***—based on the successes science has had in dealing with infectious diseases—***that every problem has a single, molecular cause.***

This belief is flawed. People are infinitely more complex and creative than that, especially if a problem involves strong emotions (and few problems are without emotion). Due to the complexity of humans, each of us has a wide and highly creative range of responses encompassing how we help create the problem, how we maintain it, and how we attempt to resolve the situation we are in. This goes to the point above, that the wrong question is asked.

The question that should be asked is:

"How do people get well?"

This is the question that drove and continues to drive the development of NLP (1). Understanding how some people act creatively and often unconsciously to help others and themselves to recover, often in the face of serious life-threatening challenges, gives us valuable information. This is known as a salutogenic approach. Refined, it can easily be imparted to others.

Contrast this to a focus on pathology, a compartmentalized approach to treatment. Pathology defines conditions and the process of a disease. It is about addressing one problem rather than the whole. Fix one problem, move to the next.

A salutogenic focus seeks to understand, impart and maintain healing and health rather than dissect the factors that cause disease. It fully acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between health and stress management. Rather than treat a symptom, it strengthens the life. (2)

## **RESPONDING TO CHALLENGE**

No matter when you are reading this rest assured, all times are complex and challenging. Just being alive requires that we learn how respond to those challenges. Few, if any of us cruise through life without ever encountering that reality.

Contrary to popular wisdom, the way to resolve stress is not through elimination or avoidance. Many so-called 'stress-management experts' advise their clients to identify the things that cause them most trouble (the stressor), then to find ways to remove them. If your highly paid job is giving you stomach pains, the suggestion is you resign and go live in a cabin on Walden Pond.

This simply does not work. You need a certain amount of stress to keep you alert, motivate you and help you meet the challenges of daily life. (3) If you respond rather than avoid these challenges, you flourish and grow. You have evolved to prosper in uncertainty.

Here, then, is the first important principle of this book:

We are not suggesting you can live without stress and stressors. Rather when these are inevitable, we suggest you can dramatically improve your resilience and ability to respond and resolve the challenges constructively. In this way you *reframe stress as challenge*; rather than being a victim, you learn to confront and transform that which threatened to destroy you before. Threats become triumphs.

Celebrate! Thousands of years of evolution built upon these experiences so that the payoff to overcoming challenge is growth. Progress is not simply a matter of random chance and natural selection. The organisms that survived and flourished from the humblest protoplasm to the fittest, cleverest human being are those that actively find a way through the problems and crises they encounter along the way. This prompts us to reorganize our systems, body, mind *and* spirit at higher and more complex levels. It compels us to success as a species and as an individual.

## **CONSCIOUSNESS AND COMPLEXITY**

Sir Isaac Newton suggested that everything everywhere was running down, sliding inexorably towards chaos and disintegration. But that's not always true. In our corner of the universe, we are moving towards increasingly complex arrangements of cells and systems, processes and procedures. What Newton failed to take into consideration was consciousness coupled with our ability to use it to think about thinking and to change the way we do so. In the brain, we own the only known organism that can reprogram and evolve itself and the world around it.

Of course such a miraculous metamorphosis only happens if you respond to the problem you are facing. You have to take action in order to progress. Not everyone rises to the demands of the times. When some people fail to adapt, they fall prey to one or more of the current epidemic of conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, chronic pain and fatigue. Sadly, since the current mainstream response is either to prescribe drugs or talking therapy, many of these people fail to find a way through their problems. Some just sit back and whine. They have been brainwashed by people with vested interests, such as therapists and TV advertisers for prescription medications, to believe they are the victims of their past experiences, need drugs, or lots of expensive treatment. Provided they are not resistant patients or in denial, they may feel better, but, only a long, long way down the line. People in this situation consistently live below par.

Then there are those who respond quickly and energetically to the curve balls that life throws at them by making quantum leaps to new levels of experience and fulfillment. These and the people who help them on their way represent the rainmakers we model. They are the success stories we study to find out what they do that is different. These are the people who are consistently able to access the process of ***Being Happy*** (from this point on we capitalize the phrase to indicate that we are speaking about a proprietary process as opposed to an accidental event). And here's the clincher. Their skills are learnable.



NLP, the technology we apply to model this and pass on what is found to other people can be thought of in a number of ways:

- As the study and application of excellence;
- As a tool to create other tools;
- As a means of accelerating teaching and learning.

This approach has given rise to scores of techniques to overcome a wide range of debilitating problems and behaviors, from phobias to long-standing trauma and abuse; from procrastination to anxiety, depression and obsessive thinking.

In this book we look at the growing body of research that supports much of what the developers of NLP have been suggesting for forty years. Because NLP itself is not a discrete field and its effectiveness depends on the behavioral flexibility of the practitioner, it does not easily lend itself to standardized Randomized Control Testing (RCT). To overcome this, we offer principles, techniques and presuppositions found to be useful while examining research archives in many different fields to see *why* these might work.

As much independent research today is conducted without thought of a particular application (except, perhaps, with the hope of developing a new drug), we have looked at several promising discoveries with the intention of creating and testing simple, non-invasive techniques based on their findings.

Above all, we study people, in particular, people who are naturally happy, even when they are severely tested. Those who catch our attention are not impractical or unrealistic. They do not pretend nothing is wrong. They do not ignore qualified advice, but nor do they demand that other people take responsibility for their health and well-being. What they do share are some important characteristics: hope and optimism and a tendency to be proactive.

Dr Naveed Tippu ([4](#)) is a physician in the United Kingdom who many years ago attended *Working in the Miracle Zone*, one of our seminars on NLP and immune function. What Dr Tippu had not yet shared with anyone there was that he'd been diagnosed with leukemia. To date, four bouts of chemotherapy failed:

“After I had a bone marrow transplant from my brother,” Dr Tippu recalls. “I developed a condition known as ‘graft versus host’ disease, and for two years I was on high doses of immune-suppressant drugs to prevent my body rejecting the transplant.”

All the signs were that the treatment wasn’t working.

At one stage, a doctor had said to him, “Dr Tippu, I think you should stop denying the seriousness of your condition.”

Dr Tippu replied, “I am not denying the seriousness of my condition. I am just denying that I cannot get better.”

During the seminar, Dr Tippu fixated on the suggestion that so-called “exceptional patients”, those who recover from serious, even life-threatening, conditions, behave at some level differently from people who remain ill, often with the same disease. Dr Tippu began to explore and apply principles drawn from NLP, some featured in this book, to help him deal with his disease. As he put it, ***he started to live as a person recovering from cancer, rather than someone who had it.***

Now, more than a decade later, he says, “As a doctor, I have to maintain an objective, scientific attitude, and it is possible that the disease was burning itself out anyway—although that would have been unusual. But, even if that were the case, I am 100% convinced that NLP helped my recovery. I have to say that I never doubted for a moment that I would get better.”

What we find interesting is that Dr Tippu didn’t try to seek out abstract goals such as ‘happiness’ or a ‘cure’. He understood that health and well-being is a process. He set out to research what strategies people in recovery followed. He explored and tested the strategies of “well” people—not least those that encouraged optimism and hope. He filled his life with family, future plans, challenges and helping others. And life seemed to respond.

At the time of this writing, books about happiness top the self-help best seller lists around the world. Some are useful; many are not. The fact that they are so popular shows that people are starving for solutions, rather than insight and diagnosis.

For more than a century, psychology has been seeking to find out what was wrong with you, or to get you to accept yourself the way you were. It never suggested that people could—and should—be able to have really good feelings most of the time.

Many people who sought help because they were unhappy believed therapy was to help them overcome their problems and achieve greater happiness; yet we doubt whether that was ever the objective of any system of psychotherapy.

Of course, there are drugs that can make you feel happier. The trouble is drugs wear off and they have side effects. Ecstasy is a drug the US Government investigated and found it had this terrible side effect: people were happy and full of warm feelings for six or eight hours; however, those taking it could also dehydrate and die if they continued ingesting it.

Many “feel-good” drugs work by increasing the brain’s serotonin levels. But, more serotonin is not necessarily better and it may not even work the way the pharmaceutical companies claim. Meta-analyses of the most commonly prescribed anti-depressants show the drugs perform little better than placebo (5); too much serotonin can adversely affect the way you think, feel and move. An overdose may be fatal.

The best kind of serotonin is that which is naturally produced. The following constitute the optimal methods for producing the right levels of serotonin naturally (6):

- a. Alter your thinking processes;
- b. Do the right things for the right reasons;
- c. Take action directed at making your life happier;
- d. Eat better;

And, literally and figuratively

- e. Live more in the light.
-

Most people go through their life as if they are playing Pachinko. They drop thoughts, actions and events into their lives and let them ping off anything and everything that happens to be on the way down without any sense of direction.

They may set a goal (for example, “I want to be a lawyer” or “I want to be a doctor”), but they seldom go further and ask questions such as:

And then what?

How is being a lawyer or a doctor going to make me happy?

They might think that getting married, having children, two cars and a big house will be enough. But will it? They simply do not ask enough questions or they ask the wrong ones.

People habitually tend to overlook the need to pause and enjoy smelling the flowers along the way. All energy and planning is focused on achieving and very little on paying attention to the process. Some years ago, a shipping line used to advertise its cruises with the line, “Getting there is half the fun.”

We believe getting there should be 95% of the fun quite simply because when you get “there”, there is usually when you die!

## **HAPPINESS IS A VERB**

Living life as a process, rather than as a collection of material accomplishments, is the principle message of this book.

The biggest problem in seeking and selling “happiness” is that it is actually what in NLP terms we call a “nominalization”—a process that is expressed as a static thing. Nominalizations (think of words like “love”, “peace”, “self-esteem”, and “anxiety”) trick people into believing there is a specific thing they can acquire. If only they try hard enough, they will get the happiness they deserve. But, not only is happiness a verb masquerading as a noun, exactly what happiness is differs substantially from person to person.

In practice, the process of Being Happy—the active seeking and practice of actions, attitudes and associations that meet your needs and help you feel complete and content while you are involved

in them—is more attainable. You can seek out the kind of people and activities that make you feel supported and fulfilled, and explore ways of bringing these qualities into your life on a more regular basis. You can not only live more in the moment (where appropriate), responding to each challenge as it arises, but you can move ahead of the moment, learning to avoid problems such as stress and making bad decisions, even before they arise.

Notice that we said all this could occur *more regularly*, rather than *permanently*. This is simply because a state of permanent, unchanging happiness would not be supportable by the nervous system, even if we could make it happen. After a while, could we be sure that what we were feeling was happiness at all?

The answer is: we couldn't.

The human nervous system is designed to make sense of the world by comparing and contrasting bits of data. We know dark only because we have experienced light, we experience pleasure because we understand pain. We are not reviving the old religious and moral cliché that suffering is the price we pay for being human. Rather, we think of pain and suffering as signals that some important need is not being met.

So, how do we resolve the paradox that you need some kind of contrast to positive and pleasant experiences? How do you learn to live with and apply the symptom-signals that inevitably affect you at some time or another?

The answer is in two parts.

First, by choosing actively to pursue a life of Being Happy, you naturally lift the baseline of your experience. Rather like a musician who transposes a melody to a higher key, you still experience ups and downs, but the new downs are higher than the old ups.

Second, you need to understand that the symptom-signals that affect everyone at some time or another, whether in the form of pain, sadness, disappointment, illness of one kind or another are part of you, not something sent to punish or hurt. They are there to be harnessed to help you move forward. These experiences, however negatively they might be perceived, evolved as instruments of survival and growth. They are prompts to action and wellness, and you ignore them at your risk. You pay the price for trying to avoid, deny, rationalize or medicate them out of existence. Like children or pets that want your attention, if you dismiss them, they will keep coming back louder and stronger.

Sometimes, if they are ignored—like the chest pains the busy executive continues to dismiss as dyspepsia—they can kill the person they are trying to help. Thus, recognizing these cues is important. Understanding unmet needs and acting to satisfy them appropriately is essential. Becoming response-able [able to respond] is the key to becoming happier and healthier. We believe it is a matter of urgency to do this now. Not only are people who actively pursue well-being in appropriate ways happier than those who do not, we will demonstrate that they also live longer, healthier lives. These are people who have learned to stop trying to block the currents of life. Rather, they take responsibility for how they respond to the ebb-and-flow of experience.

## **BECOMING THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE**

As you too learn to do this, you'll begin to understand that you are more in control of your own well-being than you have ever believed. This book will explain how you have become the person you are, then show you how to become the person you want to be. You'll discover simple, practical, highly effective ways to use your brain so that it produces better quality neurochemicals, so that the synapses fire better, so that you can make clearer images of what you want and use those images to move you forward.

When you have the right strategies in place, you'll be in a position to test new experiences in order to check whether in practice they are going to make you feel happy or not. Of course, we cannot predict with any certainty what will make you happy. Human beings are incredibly adaptable. They can learn to enjoy anything. They can sit for hours on riverbanks holding the end of a piece of string waiting for a fish that may never bite; they jump out of airplanes, collect stamps, run, cycle and swim until they drop, scare themselves silly with horror movies ... all for fun. A later chapter discusses what science says about what makes you happy and what not—but, in the end, you need to decide what *you* will enjoy, then make sure that every day is more full of fun and good feelings than not.

You also need to inoculate against the negativity trying to get in. Emotionally destructive messages are everywhere; television news is bad hypnosis, reinforcing, every hour on the hour, the belief that times are bad and getting worse. We've seen and heard this message for 50 years ... but, strangely, in spite of all the challenges—or, maybe because of them—many things just get better.

Bad things will always happen somewhere in the world. And, while we are not preaching denial of reality or advocating inaction, you need to understand the simple truth: ***if you always focus on negative things, you'll feel bad.*** If you start to look for solutions that are different and better, that's the way your world will become. This is not "positive thinking", it is brain science.

The time has come to take things even further. Remember: even if times are truly bad, it is also an opportunity to take a gigantic evolutionary step forward. Being Happy presents a shift in paradigm, particularly suited to the 21st Century—one that is not based on deficit and repair, but on opportunity, optimism, choice and change.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, take a few moments to think about what you really believe would make you happy. Write down your thoughts in as much detail as possible. This is your Happiness Wish List. Feel free to return to it at any stage to add, remove or review your entries.

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#### FOOTNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

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## **PART ONE**

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How you came to be ...  
THE PERSON YOU ARE

### **CHAPTER ONE: THE FOUR CONDITIONS OF BEING HAPPY**

In this chapter

- Living by choice, not chance;
- Why fixing problems doesn't work;
- How hope and optimism can save your life;
- Being Happy is a habit you can acquire.

Being Happy is an antidote to one of the most widespread and destructive silent epidemics of our time. Millions of people, even in the most developed corners of the world, exist in the grip of a complex, chronic and sometimes overwhelming sense of pessimism and despair. Despite living in the most prosperous, technologically advanced and potentially rewarding time in recorded history, they still see the glass half empty, and getting emptier by the moment.

On the other hand, people around the planet are living near to their fullest potential, even though sometimes it is against what seem like insurmountable odds. These people are not necessarily more intelligent or talented than their friends and neighbors—but, when you look closely, they do



display important differences. And these are differences that can be acquired by anyone determined to shift from life of quiet desperation to one of optimism and possibility.

Our proposal is not that you will never feel “down”, but that you recognize that you have a choice to do something about it. Where, when and, even, if, you choose to make that choice is entirely up to you.

Virginia Satir, the great family therapist often said, “If people have choice, they will make the best one.”

The problem is often they do not have choices.

When Virginia spoke about having a choice, she didn’t mean knowing about it intellectually. She believed you had to have a way of *experiencing* alternative feelings, behaviors and responses before you could choose them.

Our new understanding of brain science bears this out. Advanced scanning techniques demonstrate that every activity we indulge in, physical and emotional, has a neural pathway in the brain. Like a road map, the network guides our direction. The synapses in the brain need to fire in a particular sequence in order to result in a particular outcome. The stronger the network, the more automated the response. In order to create new choices, we need to create new neural pathways, which, in a sense, is the purpose of this book.

Every time you read, hear or experience something new, you create another neural pathway. Every one of the millions of thoughts and actions you take for granted has its own route laid down on your brain. **Progress and change therefore, is likely to be far easier when you play to and develop strengths than if you try to fix your problems by removing what’s been going wrong.**

So far, most schools of psychology have tried to accomplish peace-of-mind by extinguishing what psychologists call *The Negative Affect*. The theory is that if we can only eliminate the bad feelings, we’ll end up in a perpetually joyful state.

If only that were true. More than 100 years’ of various kinds of therapy—including trillions of dollars worth of psychotropic drugs consumed annually—have proved largely ineffective. Even where scientists have been successful in medicating “bad” feelings away, the result has not been

happiness. Too often, people are left without the official symptoms of depression, but end up feeling somehow disconnected from life. Happiness is not the prize for running away from pain.

Put simply, people need to develop the habits of Being Happy and content. This means we not only need to learn the behavior of happy people, but we also have to develop the neural networks that support good feelings.

How can we do that? The good news is we've been doing it even before we are born. *It is called learning* and it is something the brain is designed to do.

Learning is far more intriguing than was once believed. The fact that we now know we are constantly and literally altering the architecture of our brains should come as a massive wake-up call—not just to us as individuals, but also as parents, educators, and policy-makers of all beliefs and affiliations.

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### **TAKE A MOMENT TO DO THE FOLLOWING EXPERIMENT**

1. Sit comfortably with hands flat on your knees.
2. Now, simultaneously touch the tip of your nose with the forefinger of your right hand and the lobe of your right ear with your left forefinger.
3. Put your hands back on your knees, and then reverse the action: left forefinger to nose, right forefinger to left earlobe.

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You will probably find this movement somewhat confusing, but please persist. Repeat from 1 to 3 until you can do it without thinking.

Congratulations. Within the space of a few minutes, you have created an entirely new neural pathway—one that gives you the choice to perform a highly complex action with little or no conscious thought. Neuroplasticity, or the ability of your brain to reprogram itself, has allowed you to organize hundreds of thousands of cells at a higher level of order. Not only have you developed a technique that will facilitate clear thinking (try a few rounds of this before a challenging meeting or exam, or to calm down if you are feeling particularly upset), but you have also disproved Isaac Newton's *Second Law of Thermodynamics*. Instead of descending into chaos and confusion, your brain has organized itself at a more complex level than before.

The fact that you have developed a new neural pathway means you have also expanded your choices. Increasing the number of your responses—the wiring and firing of your synapses—is something that we do until the moment we die. The problem is, you have probably been wiring and rewiring your brain indiscriminately. The new programs you have created have been created without thought or system. The more you repeated them, the stronger they became. The brain automates behavior—and not always the behavior we prefer. Since repetition and intense emotional arousal are two factors that hasten automation, you have been at the mercy of external experiences and events, simply because you didn't understand how you created your own, unique internal world.

More than 30 years ago, NLP put forward a model of experience that has proved remarkably durable throughout the years that followed.

It was already agreed (in certain circles, at least) that people's internal representation of external reality was a construct—something they created as a description of the world they lived in. NLP developers, with their interest in the five senses and how they were used, proposed that people used the different ways they saw, heard, felt, smelled and tasted to sample external reality. They then ran the data acquired from this through a series of filters or constraints: their individual nervous systems, the norms of the society in which they lived and their unique personal history. This information became assembled into a mental model or map, which was then used to navigate the individual's way through the complex and often bewildering world in which he or she had been born.

In the process of model-making, the data is inadvertently manipulated by deleting some bits of information (nobody could possibly process all the information coming at them at any one

moment), distorting others (attributing meaning to what was happening) and generalizing from what was experienced (ascribing the qualities of the single or the few to the many).

From this, we make several important conclusions:

- Maps differ from person-to-person, depending upon the way each uses his or her senses and filters, and upon which information is deleted, distorted and generalized;
- The map is not the territory. We should not confuse our representation of reality with reality itself;
- A map is either inadequate or fit for purpose. The world does not lack resources to help us meet our needs; it is our maps that are often impoverished;
- Once we begin to understand the structure of internal experience, it is often easier to change the map rather than to try and change the world itself.

Changing the map, as we'll demonstrate later, is easier than it sounds. What it requires, though, is a desire and commitment to learn. Given the near infinite potential of our innate capacity to learn, it is strange that we only seem to knuckle down and learn something new when we feel we have to. The idea of acquiring the skills to have good feelings for no particular reason is alien to us. One of the most popular misconceptions in psychology is that feeling good is more or less a matter of chance.

## **THE HOW OF CHANGE**

In fact, like all other experiences, feeling good has a structure. If you do certain things internally, make the right pictures, hear the right sounds, manipulate the right feelings (what we call [kinesthetics](#)), and you will feel better. When you use these techniques to improve the expectation that things can and will get better, you'll improve in ways that will surprise and delight you.

How do we know this?

Initially by observation and experience. We have an increasing body of evidence to support this. Studies have been accumulating for more than 50 years that the qualities of hope and belief, which together contribute to what we can call positive expectancy, are significant aspects of relieving symptoms and healing on both a physical and an emotional level. [\(7\)](#)

Such studies report a significant association between hope and optimism and a vast raft of improvements in feelings and functionality including:

Fewer asthma attacks;

Alleviation of stress and anxiety;

Reduction of pain;

Easier withdrawal from narcotics;

Altered gastric functioning;

Lessened need for pre-and post-operative medication;

Relief from fever;

Fewer chronic coughs and headaches, including migraine;

Improved control of blood sugar levels of diabetics.

Patients who rate high in optimism and hope have also experienced shorter recovery times after surgery or trauma, including: cardiovascular incidents, decreased frequency and severity of angina attacks and even extended survival after a diagnosis of cancer. [\(8\)](#) [\(9\)](#) [\(10\)](#)

In contrast, those who display negative and depressive states may be more vulnerable to infection, and experience aggravation of existing or underlying illness, and slowing or disruption of the healing process. [\(11\)](#) [\(12\)](#)

It seems common sense that massive funding should be directed towards exploring and developing these drug-free, non-invasive methods of improving health and well-being. But, this is not a currently popular approach. Despite the weight of its own research, orthodox science dismisses a positive outcome unattributed to either drugs or surgery as a “placebo response”. Such outcomes are regarded as little more than irritating “noise” that distracts from the real clinical effect of the treatment.

By choosing to disregard the phenomenon, these scientists are throwing the baby out with the bath water. The placebo effect, as far as we can tell, is not only experienced to some degree or other by everyone on the planet, but it occurs with every healing substance and ritual in every culture in the world. The placebo is, quite literally, the most powerful drug we have ever known.

Because the placebo is used in every orthodox test to measure the efficacy of a new medication, science has acquired more experience of it than of any other treatment in the world.

Mostly, researchers prefer to ignore the effect—but, something weird has been happening in recent years that have been throwing the pharmaceutical world into disarray. Once-popular medications, such as Prozac, seem to be losing their punch. Their efficacy is dropping dramatically. Insiders theorize that it is not that the old drugs are getting weaker, but that placebo effect seems somehow to be getting stronger. (13)

Nevertheless, orthodox science continues to dismiss as irrelevant any result not attributed to a specific, measurable cause. But, this will have to change. Gershom Zajicek points out in a seminal paper in *The Cancer Journal* that, since nothing in current pharmacokinetic theory accounts for the placebo effect; it is regarded as random error or noise, which can be ignored. (14) But, Zajicek identifies the placebo effect as “the healing force of nature” which, in our own experience and that of a new breed of researchers, can now be triggered by an extensive range of techniques, including many of those developed through the modeling and creative tools of NLP.

## **THE POWER OF OPTIMISM**

Optimism is one of the most important aspects of Being Happy. This is not the same thing as false hope or denial. Optimists are simply people who look forward to things. An optimist is the kind of person who wakes up in the morning and asks, “How much fun am I going to have today? How am I going to enjoy myself?”

This is far from anarchy or pure hedonism. These are important questions we need to answer if we hope to master the art of Being Happy. These people create and nurture expectancy, and expectancy, as we’ve pointed out, is a key factor in bringing about change. How are you going to enjoy life? And, how much have you been enjoying your life so far?

According to University of California psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky, happy people tend to have very similar experiences to unhappy people. The difference is unhappy people spend

nearly twice as much time ruminating over disappointments than happy people. (15) This is one of the reasons we avoid asking depressives what they are worried about. They are seldom short of answers. And depression, if exposed to it long enough, can be contagious. (16)

Some people are looking to find good things about life and some people are just hoping to find something that makes them happy one day. These are the pessimists. Pessimists appear optimistic in the sense that they keep hoping for something good to happen, but the way they go after what they want—that is, if they even know what they want and actually do anything at all to achieve it—is often set up in a way that makes it inevitable that they fail.

Everyone knows the person who loves books. We know one person who wants to know everything there is to know about neurobiology and buys every book on the subject the moment it is published. He has a library of thousands of books—almost none of which he has ever read. He is constantly hopeful that somehow he will absorb the information contained in these books, but never cracks a single volume.

The result? He's also constantly disappointed so he keeps buying more books in the hopes, we assume, that magically his collecting will reach critical mass and all the world's knowledge of neurobiology will spontaneously download into his consciousness.

Unless he actually changes his strategy, he will continue to be disappointed. His strategy for reading books is a complete failure; however, his strategy for being disappointed functions perfectly. It hasn't failed yet.

How could he stop himself from feeling down about his (non-)reading habits? One solution would be to learn to read quickly, thus setting his responses so that the more he reads the better he feels. That's how we (the authors) make our way through hundreds of books every year. And, even though many of the books have been a disappointment—especially those that steal other people's work (you know who you are!), we are never pessimistic about getting out of each whatever we want.

The first time an audience was informed that “disappointment needs adequate planning” there was a collective mutter of confusion.

The audience needed to think about it for a moment. If you do not plan to be disappointed, if you do not set up a catalogue of things that absolutely have to be in place in order for you to be happy, then you would not know when to have the feeling we call disappointment.

Uncontrolled disappointment can destroy lives, especially if we fail to understand how the process of being disappointed functions and its effect on us.

The members of one family (with the exception of the mother) sought help for their problems one at a time. Each of them felt they were responsible for the unhappiness and dysfunction of the others. Finally, the mother, the only family member who denied needing any kind of help, agreed to a meeting. She proceeded to describe in extraordinary detail how each member of the family needed to behave in any given situation in order for them all to “be happy”. The crisis came on their return from a long-awaited holiday, planned by her to help them learn to be a family again, during which one of the children accidentally slammed a door. The mother declared the holiday “ruined” and insisted the family returned home. She said later, “I was so looking forward to this time away together, and now I’ve never been so disappointed in my life.”

From our point of view, the problem is not a ‘dysfunctional family’ or ‘obsessive-compulsive’ behavior, or, even, as had been suggested by a psychiatrist, a ‘borderline personality disorder’. It was simply that the mother planned to be disappointed. She didn’t know how to do things any other way.

The pictures she created internally representing her model of achievable reality were so detailed they resembled virtual reality. Not surprisingly, she had been diagnosed as dyslexic, a condition that is often characterized by the ability to create particularly vivid imagery.

Meanwhile her family didn’t share the extraordinarily beautiful creativity of her vision. In fact, it was so detailed she could never have hoped verbally to share it in any depth. By trying to fix the family’s problems she inadvertently created an impossible challenge. It came so naturally to her that she failed to notice that the harder she worked to create the perfect fix, the more she was disappointed and the unhappier the whole family became.

This is not to say we shouldn’t expect good things to happen. We need to make plans, and it is good to anticipate excellent results. However, if we want them to happen the way we plan, we need further action.

Think about the wife who wakes up and thinks, “My husband will remember our anniversary and, in a moment, he will wake up and say, ‘happy anniversary’ and I know I’ll feel really good.”

Then he wakes up; she looks at him with that certain expression and he says, “What?”



The woman replies, "Nothing".

He rises and takes a shower. When he comes out, she looks at him with a raised eyebrow.

Again he says, "What?"

The woman repeats, "nothing", and he goes off to work.

While he's away, she thinks, "Ah, I know! He must have a big surprise planned. Maybe he's going to buy me a really expensive present; maybe he's organizing a surprise party, or, taking me out to that expensive restaurant..."

All of these things that should be pleasing to anticipate actually constitute a list of things to be disappointed about should he actually forget. Our advice would be simple: remind him. Just leave him a frigging note!

Optimists thus are people who instead of making plans to be disappointed, design plans in a way they can be realized. By doing so they can Be Happy.

## **THE FOUR CONDITIONS OF BEING HAPPY**

1) Accountability;

2) Proactivity;

3) Sensory Acuity;

4) Adaptability.

From a combined experience of more than seven decades of helping people achieve their goals, we have identified four conditions that need to be present in order for Being Happy to be a reality.

## **THE FIRST CONDITION OF BEING HAPPY IS ACCOUNTABILITY**

The blunt truth is you are answerable, accountable, for the results you get. This doesn't mean you are to blame for all of your problems, or that you cannot get help in your journey from whomever and/or whatever is available. It simply means you stop, really stop, expecting to be the passive recipient of change.

Sometimes, working for change will be a partnership with the person who is your current teacher or mentor. At other times it will be a solo occupation supported by a resource such as this book. Above all to be accountable or answerable means nobody can do this for you. You have to go buy the book. You have to find the practitioner. You have to decide on your own directions and outcomes, and you have to make the plan. Simply stated, *you* have to be the agent of your change.

QUESTION: How answerable are you to yourself for your life experiences, both positive and negative?

### **THE SECOND CONDITION OF BEING HAPPY IS PROACTIVITY**

People who are naturally inclined to Being Happy are *action-oriented*. When they decide what they want and know how to go about pursuing it; they know they have to act. By contrast pessimism and depression are often marked by *inaction*. While it is sometimes necessary to take time out, to rest and recuperate, it is never acceptable to simply sit back and wait for someone or something to come to your rescue.

QUESTION: How proactive are you? Could you be more so if the rewards are greater?

### **THE THIRD CONDITION OF BEING HAPPY IS SENSORY ACUITY**

Many of the major breakthroughs of NLP were the result of its developers' ability to pay attention, and to respond without preconceptions to what was observed. In the past, clinicians—especially psychologists—claimed to be impartial observers of human behavior. They weren't. In the early 1970s, psychologists were at war over who had the "right approach" to psychotherapy. Dozens, if not hundreds, of different schools were fighting for supremacy. The interesting part was that none of them was really successful. Nobody was actually managing to cure anyone of their problems; but, that didn't really matter as long as they were "right".

This happened because they were driven by theory and limited by their own unconscious patterning which predisposed them to failure. They were all looking at the content of the client's experience, the "why", in order to discover what was wrong, hoping that if they knew enough about why things went wrong, everything would automatically come right. They were trying to interpret what their clients were saying, and not noticing what they were doing. Nor were they noticing the effects of what they themselves did with their clients, intentionally or not.

Acuity is learnable skill. You need to develop your ability to notice what is happening (including the way you are thinking, behaving, reacting) in ways that create and/or maintain your problems, and also what the result is of any new action or intervention that you bring into the situation. In this way you also develop your ability to respond.

QUESTION: How much conscious attention do you pay to your feelings and responses, as well as to the world around you?

#### **THE FOURTH CONDITION OF BEING HAPPY IS ADAPTABILITY**

Adaptability is probably the most important condition of Being Happy. Without the facility to change your behavior appropriately and creatively in response to your environment (or to match plans you have made but not yet achieved), you become a helpless victim of chance and circumstance. Accepting that you need to cultivate adaptability and flexibility—and, sometimes to be able to tolerate the ambiguity of not yet knowing the answer—is also part of Accountability.

Cultivating these qualities will not simply help you feel better and enjoy things more. As we'll later show, they may just save your life.

Although we've put most of the practical exercises in the second part of this book, we are urging you to master the following exercise now. You will learn how to loop, spin and anchor feelings. These are core skills you will use throughout the Being Happy process.

QUESTION: Do you recover rapidly from an upset?

How flexible or adaptable do you think you are?



## **EXERCISE 1A:**

### **HOW TO FEEL GOOD FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON**

1. Think of a time and place where you felt extraordinary pleasure;
2. Analyze it;
3. Make the memory vivid;
4. Loop it;
5. Anchor the experience;
6. Repeat the previous three steps;
7. Test it.

#### **1. Think of a time and place where you felt extraordinary pleasure.**

Preferably choose an event of some lasting significance in your life. Use all your senses to do this: remember what you saw, heard, and felt—perhaps even smelled and tasted.

#### **2. Analyze it.**

As you begin to re-enter the experience, notice how you are recreating your pleasurable event. Are you making a particularly vivid picture of what happened then? Perhaps the sounds seem important. And, particularly, notice the feeling that lets you know: this feels good.

#### **3. Make the memory more vivid.**

Now make the memory even more vivid. Make the picture bigger, bring it closer, intensify the colors; turn up the sounds, or make them more exciting, or, perhaps, more mellow. If it seems you are watching yourself in the memory, step into it, so you are surrounded in the experience. Make it so it is as if you are actually there, right now. Again, pay particular attention to the feeling, noticing where it begins and where it goes. Take your time with this step. Even if you do not get it at first, rest assured—there is always a movement. It is just that we may not be used to paying this kind of attention to our internal landscape.

#### **4. Loop it.**

Just before the feeling dissipates, connect it to its starting point so that it begins to run in a loop. Increase the speed of the loop, spreading the sensation out so that it begins to fill your entire body. Spin it faster and faster until the feeling starts to “peak”, then

#### **5. Anchor the experience.**

Firmly apply pressure to the web between forefinger and thumb with the finger and thumb of the other hand. Hold it for a few moments, then release. This process is known as “anchoring”.

#### **6. Repeat the previous three steps several times.**

Each time you repeat the experience in your mind push the feelings of pleasure as far as they will go, and then anchor them on your hand.

#### **7. Test it.**

Test the availability of this feel-good resource by pinching the web between finger and thumb in the same way as in Step 5. You should re-experience the feelings which, if you like, you can loop and spin again, as in Step 4.

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**Note:** If you find the anchor fades, it is easily restored by simply repeating the exercise above. Also, whenever you experience a naturally occurring enjoyable experience, repeat the anchoring (Step 5), to build, or “stack”, the intensity of your response.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, make a list of all the useful feelings you can you access, loop and anchor (in a different place) so you can increase your emotional repertoire.

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## **CHAPTER TWO: THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**

What Works and What Doesn't

In this chapter:

- Chasing that thing called happiness
- The one step that can revolutionize your life
- Making mistakes matter
- How to boost your happiness by 70%

### **CHASING HAPPINESS**

**The Seven Components of Happiness:**

[1\) Your Parents](#)

[2\) Somewhere to Go](#)

[3\) Having Money](#)

#### [4\) Having Friends](#)

#### [5\) Having Choices](#)

#### [6\) Living in the Here and Now](#)

#### [7\) Having a Purpose](#)

Chasing after a 'thing' called happiness is a human obsession; at least for those people lucky enough not to be preoccupied with a daily battle for physical survival. Astonishingly, few people pursuing the 'secret' of happiness have the slightest idea of what happiness is or if they'd recognize it upon finding it. Then of course there are issues such as: what would you do with happiness if you could have it for the rest of your life?

Many people we meet are confident that *if only* they had certain things: a lottery win, a new car, a successful business, a partner who loved them...if only they had these things, they'd be happy. Sometimes they shift their frame slightly, stating their lives would be perfect if only they had less self-doubt, or more confidence or, greater self-esteem.

The problem with this approach is one set of objectives is too specific to offer lasting satisfaction; while the other is too vague. Both approaches exist only in the future, as dreams, goals or rewards for doing things right, whatever right is. Most people cannot define that either. Is it any wonder then that so much time is spent unsuccessfully chasing happiness when the majority of people spend virtually no time at all noticing what makes them feel good right now?

Westerners are convinced that happiness can be pursued as an end-point. Most adults (kids are another matter) spend the majority of their time working toward the well-being of their future selves. Not sure if you are one of them? See if any of these statements sound familiar.

"When I lose 20 pounds";

"When I retire";

"When I get a raise";

"When I finish school";



“When I get married”;

“When I get to spend more time with my kids,

“When, when, when...*then* I'll be happy”.

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Beginning with ‘when’ means your attention is not where it should be, *on what’s happening now*.

Research backs our observation that most people are notoriously bad at predicting with any accuracy what will make them happy. Ironically, most people manage to be highly specific about how life could fail them and how bad that will make them feel. [\(17\)](#)

We’ve already touched on the fact that a thing called happiness doesn’t actually exist. The more you believe it does, the less likely you are to ever find it. Happiness is not like a piece of real estate you can buy and move into. Happiness occurs as a by-product of doing or getting something else, and is not necessarily achieved by accumulating more stuff, or meeting that “special” someone. If you do not identify what actions and activities trigger your own positive responses, or, if you stop doing what already works, the good feelings slip through your fingers.

Throughout this book, we emphasize that we are not peddling a thing called happiness. We are not promising to give you a new car or lots of money or a promotion at work. Rather, we are offering you the tools to recognize opportunity, to develop resilience in the face of adversity, to make better choices, to plan to have good feelings rather than bad, and to be able to take decisive action that moves you forward.

Above all, we are encouraging you to develop your sensory acuity, that is your ability to measure your progress by what is working, rather than by what is not. This one step alone can *revolutionize* your life. Taken together, the tools presented will help you distinguish what is inevitable and unavoidable from that which can be changed. Equally important, these tools teach you how to develop the commitment to act, and thus to make the changes that give you the biggest returns.

You will not necessarily pass into some permanent state of Samadhi (forever free of problems and setbacks), but you will come to understand how you respond to problems, the effect this has

on your situation and develop the ability to change that response when needed. It is an ongoing process of optimizing your behavior, learning resilience, and living life consciously, rather than existing at the mercy of chance. Knowing you can become conscious and exercise choice is real freedom. This is Being Happy.

Of course, you'll be required to make some changes. You'll do some things differently from the way you have been doing them so far. You'll make mistakes, but you'll make them quicker and recover faster than before. There is a word for this. It is called *learning*.

But, first things first ...

Almost everyone has an idea of what they need to make them content. But, will it really? Researchers in recent years have focused on what really makes people happy; frequently, what they believe and what actually works turn out to be very different things.

The list below is far from comprehensive. It is a selection of the most common beliefs and aspirations coupled with the latest scientific evidence determining whether they work or not.

## **1. YOUR PARENTS**

We've put this one at the top of the list as an inoculation against the excuses we often hear for the problems people face: It is my mother (or father), It is in my genes; It is just the way I am.

The truth is ... it is. And it is not. Turns out, it is up to you.

For many years, a cheerful disposition has been considered to be a learned response. Happy parents seemed to have happy children; depressive parents produced gloomy and despondent offspring.

Recently, however, scientists have identified a gene variant that helps people favor the bright and positive over the negative and dull. The study, which examined people's subliminal preferences for happy, neutral, or threatening images, concluded that subjects who had inherited two copies of the long variant of 5-HTTLPR, a gene that controls transport of the mood and affects the neurotransmitter serotonin, clearly preferred positive images over negative ones when compared with those who had just one short variant of the same gene. [\(18\)](#)

But, does this mean that anyone without the 'happiness gene' is condemned to a life of misery and despair?

Absolutely not. Contrary to what some geneticists would have us believe, having a particular active gene only predisposes us towards certain illnesses and behaviors. This influence occurs to much less of a degree than most people believe. Far more important is the environment, both internal and external, in which that gene expresses itself. The secrets and skills of Being Happy give you the tools to shift your neurochemistry thereby altering your internal and your response to your external environment, systematically and consistently.

Through this process you change your feelings, and it is possible you may actually change the gene itself. [\(19\)](#)

Read that last sentence again. Yes! You *do* have the ability to rewrite your own genetic code by the choices you make, the actions you take and the life you live. If you are unable to find the motivation to this for yourself, then do it for the kids you might have. Become the best you possible.

## **2. SOMEWHERE TO GO**

*"If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there."*

Lewis Carroll

Goals are important; no doubt about it. But they are not important in the way most people think. Rather than wasting effort trying to force your goals to success, allow your goals to guide you. In other words, set goals that enhance your life rather than create obstacles within it.

As we explain in a later chapter, this is not a license to go back to the old ways of letting life kick you around like a football; rather it is recognition that being sensitive to changes, both inside and outside of yourself, will help you adapt in more positive and rewarding ways.

Sticking rigidly to outdated goals and outcomes breeds dissatisfaction. Research supports our claim that people who are prepared to change direction in order to match their evolving needs end up measurably happier (about 30% more, say the scientists) than those who do not. [\(20\)](#)

So how do you know if your goals are good goals? Good goals are usually easily visualized, big, bright and appealing. Good goals work together to create a foundation and then stack upon each other becoming stronger the higher they go. Weak goals are generally poorly defined and often include conflicting values. These may be subtle (think of the person who wants to travel the world while also wanting a home and family), but if they are not congruent with each other, can have a devastating effect on your life. [\(21\)](#) Living with weak goals and conflicting values is like trying to build with blocks on water. Whatever you build will fall over and float away...or sink.

Take a few moments to complete the following exercise to make sure all your metaphorical ducks are properly lined up.



#### **GOALS EXERCISE 1B: YOUR VALUES APP.**

1. Rapidly, and without too much thought, list 10 things that are most important to you.

These are values, such as “love”, “peace”, “family”, “security”

2. Prioritize your list, from the most important to the least important.

3. Now, close your eyes and imagine your values as colorful icons on the screen of a handheld, touch-screen device, such as an iPad® or a Smartphone.

4. Identify the quality that links all the values on a continuum.

This might be color or size or position on the screen. The icons might gradually change in tonality, or range from bright to dim, or they might even be stacked one on top of the other each other (which probably also tells us you are a Windows® fan).

5. Examine the order closely, paying attention to any values which might seem to conflict.

For example, “security” might turn up adjacent to “adventure”. In practice, it would be difficult always to be secure while enjoying adventure.

6. Now, carefully drag each icon into a new position, upgrading some and downgrading others.

For example, “adventure” might need to be one or two positions higher in the arrangement, or “security” needs to be dragged down. Ensure that the sub-modality of the icon changes to match its new position. (You may notice a physical sensation as the icons recode internally.)

7. Test each change, reviewing how it would play out in real life, and adjusting its position if necessary.

8. When you have made sure all conflicts have been resolved, take a few moments to brainstorm ways you can meet the needs of each value.

Project yourself into the future to test the practicality of the new arrangement. It may be you can follow one path for a while, before embarking on another. Or, sometimes a value turns out to be less important than you thought, and you can simply delete it.

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## **GOALS: WORKING TO YOUR STRENGTHS**

In business and the more aggressive schools of self-development, people are encouraged to acquire “motivation”, as if motivation is something you can get by the gallon at the filling station. Some NLP trainers are known for their ability to hype people up that you can almost see them tearing out of a seminar in a state of high excitement, then skidding to a halt with that expression on their faces that goes, “Um ... okay ... Ah...Where do I go now?”

Then again, any goal is not necessarily better than none at all. Goals can do more harm than good if your goals are not well thought out (fit for purpose) and, if you are not flexible enough in pursuing them.

Some goals do not match the needs, nature and abilities of the person who sets them. For example, not everyone is cut out to accept all the responsibilities that having vast amounts of

money involve. People seldom take the trouble to inventorying their unique needs, nature and abilities, so do not notice the mismatch. And if that happens, the likelihood is that you can end up even more dissatisfied than before. [\(22\)](#)

Be honest with yourself. Are you really ready to accept the responsibilities associated with the achievement of your greatest dream? Take some time to consider the ramifications of getting exactly what you want before moving on. How will achieving it impact other areas of your life? How will the people who are important to you be affected?

### **GOALS: GOING FOR IT**

Being Happy, as we've already suggested, is a side-effect of doing something else. Being happy often lies more in moving towards material goals, than in achieving them. The anticipation of success rates is consistently rated more highly than actual realization. It is also a potent antidote to depression and fear. [\(23\)](#) As any lover worth his or her salt will tell you: much of the real fun is in the chase.

### **3. HAVING MONEY**

If you want to be happier, healthier and live longer, the solution is simple ... get rich.

Received wisdom is that you cannot buy happiness—a belief usually promoted by people who do not have money, or, by many religions, governments and other authorities responsible for convincing their subjects that they are better off than they think.

But is it actually true?

Research given widespread coverage a few years ago claimed a strong correlation between life satisfaction and purchasing power. The study found people did feel better when they earned more. But, curiously, the effect didn't appear to increase at the same rate as individual wealth.

According to Professor Richard Layard, often called Britain's Happiness Tsar, the correlation between wealth and happiness disappeared once the gross national product exceeded \$15,000 per person a year. [\(24\)](#)

Other studies showed that, contrary to expectations, poorer people—such as those living in the slums of Calcutta—were not necessarily deeply dissatisfied with their lot. (25) Cheerfulness and optimism, the experts said, can flourish in the unlikeliest places, and were not dependant upon wealth.

Part of this particular viewpoint is based on an earlier study by Richard Easterlin claiming that though better-off people were generally happier than their poorer counterparts in a given country, people living in wealthy nations were not necessarily happier than those in poorer countries. This became known as *The Easterlin Paradox*. (26)

Unfortunately, the conclusions are wrong. The samples used in Easterlin's study were too small to be significant, unlike another study in 2008 which proved exactly the opposite: the citizens of rich countries are happier. And the richer people are, the happier they become.

Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, economists at the University of Pennsylvania, analyzed multiple rich datasets spanning many years and established a clear positive link between a society's economic development and its average level of happiness. Furthermore, they found no point at which the phenomenon tapered off. No argument here. Richer equals happier, the authors claim. (27)

There's more ...

Not only are you happier if you are high in the socioeconomic pecking order, but your ranking is a better early indicator of overall well-being, including chronic disease, disability, and early death. You are set to be healthier and live longer if you enjoy. More money equals:

- More years of education;
- A high-status job;
- More friends and neighbors (who also have high incomes and good education) than your less fortunate fellow citizens.

The *Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health* draws data from the fields of psychology, sociology, psychoneuroimmunology, medicine, epidemiology, neuroscience, biostatistics, and

economics. Their finding is unequivocal. Your position on the *Socioeconomic Scale* (SES) directly impacts various environmental and psychosocial pathways to affect the functioning of your biology. Simply put, money not only buys happiness, but it can buy you a longer, healthier, happier life. [\(28\)](#)

Of course, this doesn't mean that rich people are never unhappy or sick, or that money will guarantee that you are happy and live forever. Nor does it mean that stressing out to keep up with the Joneses, what economists call The Hedonic Treadmill, is going to help you in the long run. The reason we emphasize the importance of having big dreams and taking effective steps to become successful in your own terms is simply this: worrying about paying the bills or not knowing where the next job is coming from can have a deeply corrosive effect. Dream big, work to improve your lot, have fun ... live up.

So maybe you are not yet at the top of the financial heap, no worries. There are still lots more you can do. How you feel and who you share whatever you have with people who matter will still put you ahead of the game.

## **FEELING WEALTHY**

We in NLP have always emphasized the point that the map, or internal model, of the person's world, is often more important than whatever it is that's 'out there'. What you believe and how you feel dictates the quality of the life you live.

Perhaps to their surprise, researchers found something unexpected when studying the relationship between health and wealth. It is not only how wealthy you are that improves your well-being, *but how wealthy you feel*. [\(29\)](#)

Feeling as if you have enough wealth is a powerful predictor of whether you'll live longer than someone who might have the same amount of money, but regards him or herself as poor. Gratitude for what you already have doesn't mean you have settled. Rather it means you are more likely to enjoy greater-than-average health and well-being.

Ask yourself, how much of your life gives you satisfaction as it is right now? Have you ever stopped to consider what you have achieved and what you have? Or has your focus been on what's still missing from your life?



People can feel rich internally, externally, or both. You can look at your bank balance and congratulate yourself on beating the credit crunch and hanging on to your money. Or you can turn your attention inward and review those experiences, situations, abilities and responses that give you a warm, flowing glow in the area around your heart.

Gratitude, that wonderful state of being is essentially identifying and appreciating everyone and everything that make you happy to be alive. It is a powerful tool for connecting with others and for healing and growth. [\(30\)](#)

The following exercise will allow you to identify and cultivate gratitude.



## **EXERCISE 2:**

### **GRATITUDE INVENTORY**

1. In a notebook draw three vertical columns.

Give each column a heading:

Column 1) Assets,

Column 2) Attributes, and

Column 3) Relationships.

2. Now, begin to fill out each in some detail.

**Under Assets:** These may be material (for example—"I own my house outright") or physical (say—"I am the fittest I've ever been"). Assets may refer to your experience, such as educational qualifications, work experience and so on

**Under Attributes:** These are practical abilities, such as being able to complete projects on time, as well as emotional capabilities, such as patience, endurance, even temper etc.

**Under Relationships:** list all those people (friends and family) you are confident you can rely on. Think: if I was in trouble in the middle of the night could I call up any of these people and know without a moment's doubt that they will turn out to help me?

3. When you have at least 20 in each category (feel free to ask your family, friends and colleagues for suggestions), choose one from each.

4. On a separate page, one for each item, write a sentence beginning with:

*"Today I am grateful that/for ....."* and fill in the relevant words or phrase.

5. Each morning, take a few moments to immerse yourself in gratitude. This is how you do that.

Find one example of each asset, attribute and relationship. Imagine you are actually experiencing each in turn. Absorb yourself into what you see, hear, and feel, and let the physical sensation this triggers begin to flow throughout your body. Notice the direction in which it is moving, and link the end-point to the beginning so that it begins to spin. Now speed up the spin, allowing the feeling to move muscle to muscle, cell to cell, atom to atom until you have a full-body experience.

6. Next, briefly imagine yourself moving into the day with that feeling permeating your entire being.

How would it change your experience? What would be different and better? Most important: who are the people with whom you would like to share this special kind of wealth. How will you do it? (See next key component of Being Happy, Having Friends)

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**Note:** To receive the maximum benefit, this is an exercise you should do every day. Feel free to keep adding to your gratitude lists. If you open your senses and are honest with yourself, you will never run out of things that bring a real sense of richness into your life.

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#### **4) HAVING FRIENDS**

“Remember, No man is a failure who has friends.”

From ‘It is a Wonderful Life’, 1946

Of course, sharing your good fortune presupposes you have people to share it with. This is absolutely crucial to your well-being. Multiple studies, including one of the most convincing longitudinal studies ever conducted, support the belief that personal well-being is dramatically enhanced by the friends and social support you have. [\(31\)](#) It is widely believed that 70% of personal happiness has been ascribed to having a sufficient number of friends and family with whom to share your life. [\(32\)](#)

Later on in this book, we will offer you powerful ways of expanding and deepening your social bonds.

#### **5) HAVING CHOICES**

“You may think that in life, a lot of things happen to you along the way. The truth is, in life, you happen to a lot of things along the way.”

Anonymous

For many years, NLP practitioners have preached that having several choices is better than having none. It was often said, “If you have one choice, you are stuck. If you have two, you are on the horns of a dilemma. If you have three or more, you have behavioral flexibility.”

This doesn't automatically mean that having numerous choices is better than having only a few. Researchers now agree that too many options may actually paralyze you. Swarthmore College psychologist Barry Schwartz has coined the phrase, "The paradox of choice", to reflect how unlimited opportunity may work against rather than toward your sense of satisfaction. Too much choice simply stresses us out.

However, the definition of choice within the NLP community differs somewhat from what is usually understood to mean simply options, alternatives, selections or preferences.

As explained earlier, choice in NLP terms means to have an option at a neurological level. If someone doesn't have the neural network to support a particular feeling or behavior, they will be unable to make that transition. If you have never looked out from a tall building without panicking (even if you haven't tried imagining doing so), it is unlikely you'll ever get over a fear of heights.

This book is largely about exploring appropriate choices, and then using the principles and techniques we present to create the neurological foundations for freeing yourself from the chains of the past. This way, you'll never have too many options or too few. You'll always be able to generate for yourself just the right choice at the right time.

## **6) LIVING IN THE HERE AND NOW (but only sometimes)**

"Yesterday is but a dream, tomorrow but a vision. But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, and every tomorrow, a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day"

Sanskrit Proverb

Much has been said and written over past forty centuries about the desirability of living in the present moment. Entire movements are based on being here now, with little real evidence that the participants' lives are any better for it. However attractive the concept of the "eternal present", you still have to remember where you put your car keys and plan to pick up the kids from soccer later this afternoon.

What is evident (and capturing the attention of researchers) is the fact that the ability to focus on what is actually happening at any one moment, rather than on what has happened, or what might happen, is a powerful antidote to negative feelings, including pain, anxiety and depression. When

you stop resisting the physical discomfort of a particular problem state, your response will often change. This hints at the possibility that this might be an innate dissipative approach that allows you spontaneously to discharge stress and reorganize your emotional and physical experience to a more positive end.

Hypnotist Milton Erickson, himself no stranger to chronic pain, often urged his patients to identify what part of their discomfort was actually present in the moment, and what existed as a memory (past) or a fear (future). Then he would suggest gentle attention on the present pain, dividing the experience into parts and lessening its impact.

Those people who successfully disengage from their problems (that is, they stop trying to make it go away, and simply allow it to exist as a physical sensation) find that the problem starts to lose its intensity, and can even disappear. It is safe to suggest that many people automatically resist uncomfortable and painful feelings by tensing up against them or trying to block their movement. Once resistance is dropped, the body-mind system is free to dissipate excess tension and reorganize at a more comfortable level. Conversely, good feelings, once you give them permission to be present, tend to expand and become all-encompassing.

The good news is this. The protocol for working with both wanted and unwanted feelings and sensations is the same. Allow the inner wisdom of your body and mind, which is the natural tendency of your system, to seek balance. Let it work its magic.



### **EXERCISE 3: WHAT IS, IS**

Letting it be

- a. Make the conscious decision to drop any internal talk about the problem.

Let your attention be on the way it presents itself, simply as a physical sensation. Notice its location, size, movement, temperature, color, weight etc. Avoid labels, such as “bad”, “painful”, “awful”. If you find yourself ruminating about its undesirability, return to the physical sensation.

b. Float out of your body and take up an observer position, almost as if you were watching someone else.

Notice the sensation and allow it to do whatever it seems to want to do—move up, down, through, around. Simply watch with curiosity, without trying to influence it.

c. Continue as long as is necessary, noticing what shifts take place.

Thank your inner body intelligence for responding to your attention and gently come back into your body.

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## **7) HAVING A PURPOSE**

*“Those who stand for nothing fall for anything”*

Alexander Hamilton, 1778

Having a purpose or meaning in life turns out to be so important to health, happiness and well-being that we will devote several chapters to what it means and how to find your own personal mission.

Historically, people who demonstrate a strong sense of meaning or purpose tend to be seen in retrospect as more heroic, worthy and successful than those who do not.

To have purpose, you do not need to be a larger-than-life character in order to harness and benefit from your innate in need for purpose and meaning. Smaller missions are also important in moving you forward. However, it is important to keep the ultimate outcome in mind, or suffer the consequences. For example a student battling with a massive study-load is more likely to succumb to stress and burnout if he or she fails to refer back to the reasons for studying and its eventual outcome. Without purpose, the steps along the way may become overwhelming, or just plain dull. [\(33\)](#)

On the other hand, clearly defining and holding in your mind the reasons for what you are doing will help maintain your momentum. A purpose presented in a way that is credible to your unconscious mind (that is, vividly imagined, using all your senses) increases both satisfaction and ease of achievement.

The astute reader might have noticed by now that most of happiness's prerequisites often exist outside the individual's immediate control. While we encourage you to identify and pursue the goals and projects that make you feel good, we want to emphasize that the kind of "feeling good" we are talking about here emanates from inside. The exercise in Chapter One, *How to Feel Good for No Particular Reason*, introduced you to your ability to create and store good feelings without external "props". All you needed was access to a previous experience that you could use as a template.

As you read on, set aside any doubts as to whether you'll ever have enough money, friends, top jobs or great neighbors to make a difference. Rather look inside for the raw material for creating a life of joy ... your model of the world.

BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER make a list of all the things that currently make you feel happy. Use the information above to help you, but feel free to note anything that doesn't appear.

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## **CHAPTER THREE: CREATING A WORLD YOU'LL LOVE LIVING IN**

Maps, Models and Mental Constructs

In this chapter

- What makes reality real?
- The source of pain and limitation;
- Developing deep expertise and intuition;
- Learning from your mistakes.

Imagine for a moment, you decide to vacation at the lake where you spent so much time fishing with your Dad. You may head out, guided only by your memory.

Perhaps you remember exactly how you got there, the route you took exiting the highway on to the narrow, bumpy road. As you travel, the road winds through a cornfield before emerging in a grove of trees before beginning the slow descent down to the lake.

Or, maybe you dug out an old map, well-worn and creased. You packed your gear, load the kids into your car, and set out. Exiting off the highway you turn on to a road that now seems a lot wider and better surfaced than you remember. The cornfield has given way to a housing development, but the line of trees is still there.

Then, as you pass through the grove anticipating your first glimpse of the lake, you find to your surprise a massive shopping mall stretching almost as far as the eye can see.

Now, it's easy to understand that the times and the terrain have changed. You do not try to drive through the mall to get to the other side. Perhaps, you either ask for directions, or you find a gas station or some other outlet, and buy a new map.

Of course today with the development of global positioning satellites, in-car navigation systems, Smartphone apps and Google Earth, it's a lot easier to find your way. You can estimate arrival times, avoid traffic snarls and even verify with certainty whether the hotel is as near to the beach as the brochure claims.

We have come a long way since the days of medieval mapmaking when most cartographers believed the world was flat and its edges patrolled by dangerous sea-serpents and dragons. Nevertheless, as anyone who has been let down by even the most up-to-date electronic equipment will testify, no map is 100% accurate, nor can it be. A map, however detailed remains nothing more than a *representation* of a particular territory rather than the territory itself. This analogy is as true of the data you use to find your way to a vacation resort as it is of the information you employ in navigating your way through life.

In *The Structure of Magic* more than 30 years ago it is stated that:

“We as human beings do not act directly on the world. Each of us creates a representation of the world in which we live—that is we create a map or model which we use to generate our behavior. Our representation of the world determines to a large degree what our experience of the world will be, how we will perceive the world, what choices we will see available to us as we live in the world.” [\(34\)](#)

The idea of mental mapping itself is not new. For millennia, great thinkers, including the rishis of the Himalayas, The Buddha, Plato, Alfred Korzybski and physicists such as Werner Heisenberg, have suggested that “reality” is narrative made up by the brain out of the stuff of the world. It is a projection of facts, actuality, collective and personal experiences filtered through each person’s

beliefs, needs and expectations. As humans we create mental maps or models that we use to negotiate the rapids of whatever reality might actually be.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming takes this to the next level. What the developers of NLP accomplished with brilliant simplicity was the identification of the mechanics behind the creation of mental models. Identification led to the development of change-agent strategies. This provided options for improved perception, which in turn increased people's options, choices and opportunities.

**Some of the key ideas of NLP include:**

- 1) Everyone relies on data from their senses to create their unique internal realities;
- 2) Each of us distills this sensory data uniquely, reducing the information available, interpreting it differently, and drawing certain conclusions from it;
- 3) We each have our sensory intake preferences. Some people are more comfortable with visual information; others rely more on words or feelings;
- 4) The mental maps we create differ in some degree from the maps of other people. Put simply, we are living together in different worlds;
- 5) The fifth, and arguably the most revolutionary presupposition of NLP is that it is often easier to change someone's map or model of the world than it is to change to world itself.

When we understand *how* as opposed to *why* we create a particular experience, we are exploring *structure and process* rather than *story and content*. By changing the structure or process, we change the experience. Like the engineer who charged the Navy a small fortune for fixing a nuclear submarine by banging on a pipe, knowing which pipe needs banging, and how hard to bang, is the secret of positive and lasting change.

In the years since *The Structure of Magic* was published, neuroscience, psychology and the experience of hundreds of thousands of people have come to support its claims. Scientists around the world now agree that our sense of reality is a narrative we recite to ourselves.

Psychologist Susan Blackmore summed it up by noting that each brain existing in a world constructs its story, its “great confabulation”. (35)

The term “mental model” first appeared in Kenneth Craik’s 1943 book, *The Nature of Explanation*. (36) The idea had been previously explored to some degree by Georges-Henri Luquet in *Le Dessin Infantin* (Children’s Drawings). Luquet suggested that children construct internal models in order to understand and represent the world. (37)

Mental model making faded into the background until Richard Bandler and John Grinder reintroduced and explored the process in *The Structure of Magic*. Their analysis had a profound impact on the fields of applied psychology and sports as well as personal and corporate development. In recent years, it has made new inroads in the delivery of health care and education.

Two books, both titled *Mental Models*, appeared in the 1980s. The first was by Princeton professor of psychology Philip Johnson-Laird (38); the second by Albert Stevens and Dedre Gentner.(39)

Since then, the concept of mental models has gained both credence and importance, in both cognitive and computer science.

Mental models profoundly influence human behavior. However mental models may be paradoxical, fragmentary or ungrounded in verifiable fact. At times they may even be hallucinatory. From our point of view, whether a mental model is true or untrue is less important than whether it is *fit for purpose*.

**To summarize, quality mental models:**

- Should share a similar structure to whatever they represent, but be constructed more simply (the map can never represent in all its details the territory it seeks to represent, but it should bear sufficient resemblance to be useful to the traveler);
- Should strike a balance between too much detail (which would make them cumbersome and slow), and too little detail (which would make accurate predictions difficult);
- Should be adaptable as external circumstances change.

The final quality, that of adaptability, is possibly the most difficult to achieve. While mental models are unstable, in that they can be changed by altering their structure, their building blocks, the foundation of each, tends to be more durable. For example, when the person of your dreams rejects your advances, your perception of him or her as kind and lovable may change. But, like all the other billions of highly information-rich frames that comprise your experience (the smell of roses, the shape of an oak-leaf, the play of light in a Canaletto painting); it is highly unlikely that you can completely forget his or her face. In this example, the rejection is the change. The person, his/her face, is part of the foundation of your mental model. [\(40\)](#)

An effective mental model needs to be logically applicable and amendable—what we call runnable. This means you can use it to predict actions and results. A runnable mental model must be easily adjusted if something doesn't work. For example, if you are compelled to turn up at the door of the person who rejected you, asking for a date without thought of the consequences, even after they've taken out a court order against you, you can be reasonably sure that particular mental model is not applicable and amendable.

With time, the face of the object of your devotions might dim, distort or drop out of your constant attention. The malleability of mental models suggests that the meaning of its component parts, as well as its totality, can be easily changed. This is a key theme of this book.

## **THE ADDITION OF LANGUAGE**

As the co-founders of NLP correctly stated, the most significant determining factor in how we construct reality is language. Language allows us to impose order on the “blooming, buzzing confusion” [\(40a\)](#) that is reality. By creating categories, distinctions and definitions, we effectively create our universe. The quality of that universe, therefore, depends on how we use language.

English, in common with most European languages, is richer in nouns than it is in verbs. This leads to a tendency to reify, or in laymen's terms, talk about and to perceive a world made up more of concrete objects (nouns) than processes (verbs). The linguistic tradition of creating sentences comprising subjects that act on objects of an independent existence, tends to cause native speakers to minimize or overlook processes and relationships.

Not every culture does this. The Nuu-chah-nulth or Nootka tribe living on the seaward coast of Vancouver Island in Canada, have only one principle form that corresponds broadly with the English verb. Their language manages this without taking either subject or object. The Nootka experience of reality, therefore, can be thought of as an endless *flow of being*. Even tangible objects like trees and boulders are regarded as extended temporal processes – “treeing” and “bouldering”. [\(41\)](#)

Understanding the role of language in creating mental models gives you enormous power to change your experience of the world and, by default, how you respond to it. Consensus reality, that is, whatever is agreed to be “real” within a society, depends upon a collective synergy of individual mental models. Needless to say, disconnects in model-making, where the model-makers experience themselves as living in and defending separate worlds, is the starting point of most human conflict. [\(42\)](#)

## **THE EDGE OF THE MODEL**

Mental models allow people to explain and function in their world, while providing each with a sense of safety. When you are functioning unchallenged within your model, preferably with people of like mind, you feel safe. Yet, as you move outwards towards the limits of a particular strongly defended mindset, especially if you leave your tribe and strike out on your own, what you’ll feel is fear. The pattern-making/pattern-matching parts of your brain have less and less to hold on to. Fear can, and often does, become panic. Indeed, your mind through fear decides there really are dragons and sea-serpents at the edge of the world.

The question becomes, what is the antidote to becoming entrenched in and reliant upon outdated mental models?

The answer is simple. Develop a deep expertise in as many fields as possible. In other words, learn and keep learning. Knowledge and proficiency are key ingredients of the antidote.

## **DEEP EXPERTISE**

Expertise is defined as the possession of specialized skill, knowledge or experience. In other words, skill arises within a runnable mental model. *Deep* expertise arises when you assemble a

sufficient number of superior mental models and couple these with a proficiency to move between them. An inability to entertain, explore and apply different mental models stops you progressing, and may have fatal consequences. Disasters of the caliber of September 11, 2001, Three Mile Island and Space Shuttle Columbia display different physical causes, yet all share the commonality of system malfunction. System malfunction results when key players fail to look at situations from different perspectives using data already in their possession.

Experience, both practical and theoretical, is the most common source of the building blocks of new mental models. No amount of book-learning will allow you to become a competent pianist, brain-surgeon, or NLP practitioner. At the same time, experience without a theoretical framework tends to lack form and direction. Later in this book, we explore the cutting-edge thought experiments that will optimize your ability to design new mental models and to acquire the information and experience necessary to develop deep expertise in any discipline.

## **INTUITION**

Successful people are usually intuitive thinkers. They are more sensitive to their “gut feelings” and, more likely to believe these feelings will direct them towards more desirable outcomes. Yet, as any good poker player will confirm, in order to trust a gut feeling, you need to know its source. The richer the source, the more probable it is that your hunch will be right. Therefore, if you wish to develop your intuition, you need to build the depth and breadth of your mental models, and learn to develop the ability to assemble and reassemble them in ways that support your desired outcomes.

Many scientists regard the concept of intuition with suspicion. Yet, the most superficial observation shows us that some people are more inclined than others to respond regularly to their hunches, and these people seem to have a significant number of hits.

The NLP approach to modeling complex and perplexing behavior has produced considerable insight into intuition and intuitive processes. Much of this insight has been substantiated by a growing collection of pioneering studies. Intuition, it seems, favors those people who actively pursue deep expertise. The ability to delve deep into our internal database for knowledge and experience is a characteristic of intuitive thinking. However, the database needs to be front-loaded and continually updated in order to facilitate recombinant thinking—that is, the ability to blend existing modules of information in new and creative permutations.

Expert chess players have been found to have a greater number of complex mental models than novices. Mastery is highly dependent on detailed, content-specific knowledge about the game coupled with an ability to access and apply that knowledge in highly efficient, often unexpected ways.

This may seem obvious, but, acquiring mastery not only improves performance, but actually changes the architecture of the brain. Merim Bilalic, from Germany's Tübingen University, compared functional magnetic resonance images (fMRI) of chess masters and novices and discovered that, rather than simply using a more complex and rapid decision-making strategy than the novices, the experts had acquired the ability to use the right hemisphere, as well as the left. Mastery, they concluded, is a whole-brain process. (43)

Herbert A Simon, a leading researcher in human consciousness, believes intuition is the ability to access and use the knowledge in mental models. (44) According to Simon, intuitive breakthrough often emerges out of a period of frustration, followed by a sense that a solution is imminent, and then, the discovery of a new way of representing the problem. The problem is set aside for a period of "incubation", after which insight suddenly surfaces in conscious awareness.

Another quality identified in intuitive people is confidence. The kind of confidence that is characteristic of intuitive people also occurs among those we regard as Being Happy.

Jay, a professional medical intuitive, says, "All this (his intuition) doesn't come out of nowhere. I am massively interested in my subject, the working of the human body and mind, and I am constantly reading across many, many different fields. This is not characteristic of specialists in medicine or science. Specialists seldom even talk to other specialists from areas of expertise outside their own.

"I believe this is a foundation of my kind of intuition. It certainly gives me confidence to go with my hunches. Sometimes something that is considered to be pathological within one set of beliefs is regarded as healthy, or even desirable, within another. Certain psychoses have much in common with the kind of transcendental experience familiar to some people who practice Buddhist, or other kinds of, meditation.

"But, I always give my insights a reality check. I do not think intuitive thinking should ever be applied to the exclusion of rational analysis. Any hunch, however strong, should be carefully checked out by your logical brain. They are characteristics of different parts of the brain, and should work together as whole-brain thinking.



“Above all, I am optimistic that I can work together with a patient to identify what is needed to restore balance to the system. That’s what I think of as real confidence. Intuition should always be directed more towards finding solutions than in identifying problems.”

Jay’s description corresponds closely with what researchers call *heuristic competence*. Heuristic competence is the individual’s confidence that he or she has the ability to find the means to resolve a problem or accomplish a task. Jay is describing heuristic competence when he speaks of his solution-oriented approach.

The actual knowledge required to resolve a problem or accomplish a task is what Jay acquires through his voracious consumption of information from many different fields. This is *epistemic competence*. Specialists in any field, including Being Happy, need to be confident that they are epistemically competent. In other words, know as much as you can about whatever it is you want to master. The greater the degree of heuristic competence, the more established is your actual competence. [\(45\)](#)

## **FEEDBACK**

From the very beginning, NLP developers rejected the obsessive problem-orientation of most schools of psychology by emphasizing the importance of observation and feedback. Mistakes were routinely reframed as information about the results of trying to get something done. If the results were in line with your objective, you were urged to continue in the same direction. If not, it was an indication that you needed to adjust your behavior.

Becoming sensitive to feedback is an important quality of Being Happy. Optimists and people who are proactive and self-reliant review their progress as a matter of course; this is a powerfully transformative action. Systems Theory tells us that feedback supporting a particular mental model will strengthen it. Feedback failing to support a model can act as a prompt for it to adapt. [\(46\)](#) The more quickly you check whether results match your expectations, the more rapidly you can take alternative action to avoid greater problems further down the line. The important thing is that you stay awake and pay attention to what’s happening in your life.

Thirty years ago, when computer programmers needed to check for errors, they had to unroll yards of code, usually down the corridor of their building, and check it, line by line. Now, the

software in your laptop has built-in error-correction which operates constantly and invisibly to reduce the risk of crashes.

So, are these skills and abilities innate in your neurological make-up, or can you develop them—in particular, the power to avoid trouble even before it arises?

Well, this is where you are heading as you read on. Even if you (incorrectly) fear this will take a lot of difficult and time-consuming work, rest assured that the hardware to accomplish all this is already installed, courtesy of your DNA. Two facts, now confirmed by neuroscientists, support this view.

1) You already have neurons in your brain that are capable of recognizing errors, correcting them and optimizing your behavior;

2) A potential error is often detected by the brain *in advance* of it actually occurring. [\(47\)](#) For example, a typist will often reveal subtle distinctive neural and muscular signals fractions of a second before a wrong key is depressed. Later in this book we will show you how to install an “[early-warning machine](#)” in your mind to warn you of impending errors in judgment.

Cell assembly theory (Hebb’s Law) suggests that “cells that fire together, wire together”. This theory hints at how you can optimize your behavior by committing to recognizing errors, correcting them, and then developing new and superior responses. [\(48\)](#)

The fact that the unconscious mind is a little ahead of conscious awareness often depresses some people who believe it means humans are little more than automatons. However, another aspect of learning (and remembering) is repetition. Through repetition you automate your behavior, consciously, deliberately and consistently.

## **LEARNING FROM YOUR MISTAKES**

Suppose you plan to post a birthday card to Aunt Mary (she doesn’t do e-mail). You have chosen the ideal Hallmark moment, handwritten an affectionate message, sealed and addressed the envelope, then set out to buy a stamp. On the way, you spot a mailbox and, without thinking, you pop the card inside. Uh-uh! No stamp!

Now, the second before the mailbox swallowed up your card, there was a surge of activity in the medial frontal cortex of your brain. Then, the instant you recognized you'd made a mistake, everything slowed down. If you'd known what was happening, you'd have been able to take advantage of these few seconds the error-correction brain mechanisms gave to analyze and, we can hope, ensure you do not make the same mistake twice. (49)

Many people who make mistakes waste enormous amounts of energy and time ruminating about their failure. Obsessing over what went wrong is highly counter-productive. In fact, obsessing and repetitive focusing on a negative may well make it easier to fail again in the future.

The following exercise is designed to enrich your mental models by learning from a specific experience of underperforming. Examples might include missing a putt on the golf course, losing your temper with your daughter who wants a belly button ring, or flubbing an important presentation or exam.

Pause for a moment and think of an experience where your performance did not deliver the results you wanted. Once you have identified a specific experience, begin the exercise.



#### **EXERCISE 4:**

#### **LEARNING FROM YOUR MISTAKES**

1) Review the inferior performance from a dissociated point of view.

In other words, run the scenario slowly as if you were watching yourself on a screen;

The purpose of this step is to review the errors in your performance so you can correct them later. Be systematic. Remain non-judgmental. This is fact-gathering, not self-punishment.

2) Now, go to the end of the scenario, associate (step into it) and run it backwards very rapidly;

3) Next, return to the observer position and create a new scenario that features you functioning optimally, effectively and error-free;

**4) When you are satisfied with this new behavior**, step (associate) into the beginning of the scenario and run it three to five times from start to finish, until it feels comfortable and natural to perform this way.

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## **CREATING YOUR OWN PARADIGM SHIFT**

In 1962, American physicist Thomas Kuhn suggested that change doesn't necessary happen in a smooth, unbroken curve. Rather, change involves a series of peaceful phases interspersed by sudden, violent intellectual upheavals. With each upheaval, one perspective on the world is replaced by another. [\(50\)](#)

Russian chemist and Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine identified what he refers to as a "bifurcation point", where systems under stress, including people, either collapse into chaos or reorganize at a higher, more complex level. At the same time, French mathematician Rene Thom's Catastrophe Theory teaches us that major transition, like paradigm change, needs to happen quickly, although the preparation for change may require substantial planning and time. [\(51\)](#)

### **SKILLS PRECIPITATING PARADIGM SHIFTS INCLUDE:**

- Increasing the number of mental models in your repertoire.

Getting stuck is inevitably the result of not having enough choice in your mental models.

- Learning to tolerate ambiguity.

You do not have to know everything all the time. Phase transition is a space between one state and another and is often marked by confusion. Relax and observe. Change will happen.

- Regularly challenge and prune your collection of personal mental models.

Take time out on a regular basis to construct valid arguments for your most treasured beliefs—not necessarily to change them, but to learn how to change points of view with elegance and ease.

Practice doing day-to-day tasks differently. For example, brush your teeth with your non-dominant hand, or, work at learning to sign your name equally well with either hand.

- Look at new uses for old models.

Sometimes an old model will provide the solution to a new problem.

## **A FORMULA FOR CHANGE**

As you progress with this program, you will learn how to apply a formula for change both consciously and systematically. To do this, you will need to:

1. Design and build a new model that is fit for purpose;
2. Identify what needs to be there in order to achieve this;
3. Create a process that will move you in the direction you have chosen;
4. Test for runnability (will this model help you predict actions and achieve results with reasonable accuracy?);
5. Identify and remove any obstacles to this process;
6. Take action;
7. Monitor your results and adjust accordingly.

Remember, the richness (or poverty) of your mental model dictates the richness or poverty of your experience and your life. Rather than simply deciding to add detail to your map, you must first understand the idiosyncrasies of that two-and-a-half pound matter of grey jelly between your ears. Working with, rather than against, your neurobiology will bring you enormous benefits. In the next two chapters you'll find out how your brain makes up its mind and how to use that to your advantage.

BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, answer the following questions.

- 1) How many mental models can you identify in your own repertoire?
  - 2) How many are fit for purpose?
  - 3) Do the mental models you identified help you predict actions and achieve the results you want?
  - 4) What new models would help you optimize your personal or working life?
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## CHAPTER FOUR: FEAR, FEELINGS AND FAMILIARITY

So, you think you are running your own brain?

In this chapter:

- The Efficiency Principle—why you have a ‘comfort zone’;
- What causes fear and how to handle it;
- You are, therefore you feel;
- How your brain makes up its mind.

Your brain is extraordinarily efficient. Whether originating from the primitive zones of Paul D. MacLean’s Reptilian complex (R-complex), or from the obsessive, never-silent, commentator and maker-of-meaning zone in your left prefrontal cortex, every activity follows the line of least resistance. This efficiency ensured our survival as a species. Hundreds of thousands of years ago on the savannah, in jungles or woods, the fact that our brains frequently erred on the side of caution was no big deal. Each day was a battle for survival. In modern times though, this can make a difference—and not necessarily for the best.

What both experience and recent developments in neuroscience have taught us is that your brain:

- Is fiercely protective;
- Communicates with your conscious awareness through feelings ([kinesthetics](#));
- Makes decisions quickly;
- Relies on information derived from past experience.



At the same time, behind the scenes, a major scuffle is taking place between a need for stimulation (new information and experiences) and the desire to keep things the same.

From a purely evolutionary point of view, these are excellent survival assets. In practical terms, however, they can sometimes act like bugs in a software program, resulting in partial, or even complete, system failure.

## **THE EFFICIENCY PRINCIPLE**

Consider new experiences. Whenever you are called upon to deal with something new and unexpected, your brain, like a general, calls on additional troops (neurons) to handle and analyze the information. This surge of neurons requires more energy, (one reason why learning something new can feel exhausting) and your built-in energy monitor immediately kicks in and triggers a sense of discomfort (sometimes interpreted as fear). On the other hand, whenever you stick with existing patterns, you use fewer neurons. There is no need to summon the reserves. The conflict is minimal or non-existent. You know what to expect. Internally this feels more familiar and secure.

The above analogy illustrates the *Efficiency Principle*, the basis of what is commonly referred to as the “comfort zone”. Strictly speaking, it is often far from comfortable. But it *is* familiar and predictable, and, for that reason, people will often avoid moving out of it. This illusion of predictability is a major obstacle to change. As the renowned family therapist Virginia Satir remarked, people often fear things not staying the same more even than death.

The Efficiency Principle also explains in part why we prefer to be with people who share our view of the world and sometimes avoid meeting new people, or experience fear whenever we do. It is far easier and requires less energy to co-exist with others if the level of conflict in thought and deed is minimal. Incorporating new and foreign value-patterns into our lives at every turn would waste both time and energy. The status quo is energy-efficient. However, it can also be destructive.

There’s no doubt that being afraid can be useful in the right context. If you start to step into the road and suddenly see a bus and heading towards you, being afraid and jumping out of the way is the appropriate response. Problems arise, however, when fear occurs in inappropriate contexts, is overwhelming, or is free-floating, with no particular trigger, or cause.

The fact is that much of the internal dissidence, (consternation and disagreement) we experience as human beings arises from an aversion to change. To explain and justify it, people keep running the same scenarios over and over and over in their mind, thereby manufacturing the same noxious chemicals their brain uses to maintain a state of perceived fear.

The fear of public speaking is an excellent example. This is often cited as the primary fear or phobia by many Americans, even if an individual cannot identify exactly what about the activity they are truly afraid. The perceived threat is mental, rather than physical. The act of speaking before a group has never killed anyone, yet the fear it engenders feels real and may force the individual into a state of near paralysis.

While it might have made evolutionary sense to be cautious and even fearful of strangers, we believe this modern day fear can also be created within the modern education system.

Perhaps a teacher suddenly singled you out to speak about a problem you didn't understand. Your heart started pounding, your stomach churned and your mouth went dry. Nevertheless, the teacher forced you to come to the front of the class. As you started to move, you felt your knees start shaking. Suddenly you became afraid you'd fall down. The fact is, your entire body was going into major stress mode and still you were expected to speak to the group. Every fiber in your body screamed: *Fight back! Run!* But, you couldn't. You were frozen with terror.

Decades later you may have forgotten this incident, but your body remembers the feeling and resurrects it each time you find yourself facing a similar situation—and each time it feels as bad or worse.

The problem is *fear hurts*. It hurts physically and emotionally, and, if we do not do something about it, fear damages our accomplishments, our bodies and the quality of our lives.

The above phenomenon is so frequently reported that the psychiatrist's standard reference, *American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)*, describes a clutch of related anxiety conditions, including:

- Panic disorder;
- Panic disorder with agoraphobia;

- Generalized anxiety disorder;
- Social phobia;
- Post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Specific phobia;
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder.

One study concludes 66% of patients suffer from more than one anxiety disorder, (52) The causes of fear-based responses are variously explained as genetic, (53) (54) “cognitive misinterpretation” of bodily sensations, especially breathing disorders. (55) Or they are attributed to social or personal factors, such as adverse life events. (56) (57) While experts might disagree about the causes of anxiety, most agree that panic attacks are marked by the sudden appearance of intense fear or discomfort accompanied by several bodily symptoms, such as accelerated or irregular heart rate, nausea and sweating. Unfortunately, the standard clinical response is to prescribe heavy-duty psychotropic (brain-altering) drugs to damp down on the symptoms, rather than to fix what is actually causing the problem.

In *Being Happy*, our concern is not *why* fear happens, but *how* a person creates and responds to it and what can be done about it. Regardless of where fear comes from, it is clear an individual is capable of creating bad feelings and amplifying those feelings to the point where she feels as if she is dying. This is not productive and certainly does little to help a person live a better life now and in the future.

The facts that you are capable of creating and amplifying fear actually means you have the ability to manufacture and amplify feelings in general. This means you can change. How, then, are you going to use your ability? You can choose to spend your time on the planet living without purpose or direction, living in fear. Or, beginning today, right now, you can choose to spend your time Being Happy. It is *your choice*.

Well?

Fear is a strange and mysterious animal. Not only do each of us experience it differently (as far as we can tell), but different things make each of us afraid.

Think about the person who turns up at a flying field, climbs into a small aircraft, takes off, then, at 10,000 feet, leaps out. The only thing preventing her from crashing to the ground is sixty yards of silk and the upward rush of air. The skydiver will inevitably pick herself up and babble about the rush, the buzz and surge of adrenalin that makes her want to get right back into the plane and do it again. Meanwhile another person with same age, height, weight, and broad experience may be reduced to a quivering wreck at the mere thought of boarding a commercial airliner on a business trip.

The conditions are the same; the responses dramatically different.

The fact is neither person is responding to reality. Each has taken similar external data, processed it according to his or her unique beliefs, values and experiences, and then built a set of responses. Even though these responses are physiologically similar (racing pulse, gasping breath, churning stomach, tingling hands and feet), the interpretation of the experience is dramatically different for each person. For the first, it is thrilling, near orgasmic, excitement; for the second, terror of blind panic and loss of control.

Ask either of them why they respond the way they do and they are likely to say, "It is just a feeling I get."

Doctor: "Where are you feeling the pain?"

Patient: "Well, it is not really a pain. It is more, like, a feeling ..."

Doctor: "So, how long has it been hurting?"

- Transcript of actual consultation (58)

The example above is typical of many exchanges between physicians and patients. The semantic value (meaning) of words differs widely from person to person, even when both assume they are talking about the same thing. Language analysts have used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to establish that English nouns have no fewer than twenty-five different semantic features. This supports the view that words, especially nouns, such as 'pain' and 'feeling', derive their meaning from prior experiences that are all linked to a common symbol. Of course, these prior experiences are unique to each individual. (59)

Due to a number of limitations (a lack of time, money and/or specialized training, coupled with an over-dependence on drug therapy or surgery), health professionals will often funnel the patient into a category with which they are familiar. “Hurting” is something doctors are trained to handle; “feeling”, less so. This is because feelings, because they cannot be seen, touched or measured, tend to be thoroughly mistrusted by science.

“We deal only in what is objectively true,” the scientist claims.

Conversely, some counselors and therapists focus so intently on feelings they put their patients and clients at risk (“So, you say you are suicidal? How does that make you feel?” the therapist might ask), or, lock them into an endless loop of memory, pain and despair.

Even psychology, which strives to be the science of feelings, is confused on the issue. Much of the confusion is semantic, rather than evidential. Psychology defines emotions, what you and we might call feelings, as universal terms and infers universal acceptance of the definitions. At the same time, they step into the basic trap of confusing verbs with nouns, thereby casting processes (verbs) as things (nouns). By doing so, some psychological approaches create the illusion of fixed, unalterable, permanent states, effectively removing from their patients and clients the potential for process and change.

Furthermore, experts may differ in their understanding of even those ‘fixed states’. This should come as no surprise.

Despite this, researchers continue to disagree about how many basic emotions there are in the human repertoire. Most include anger, distress, disgust, fear, and joy. Some add in happiness, sadness, sorrow and elation. (60) But, as you work your way through the catalogue, alarm bells should be ringing. How do you know that what you experience as sadness is not anger or fear to someone else? What is the distinction between happiness and joy?

In truth there is none, at least none that usefully allows us to understand the experience of a given individual any better. Problems arise within the methodology researchers use to approach the task of cataloguing human experience. The more frequently a particular word occurs to describe an experience, the more it is assumed the experience is the same from person to person. Frequency of occurrence is mistaken for accuracy.

Some researchers have tried to address this problem of reification by creating new terminology. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio speaks of “somatic markers”, which he regards as automated alarms. These markers are the equivalent of psychophysical signals blasting off with a message of ‘Danger!’ or ‘Go for it!’ [\(61\)](#)

People in the grip of anxiety often report knowing their response is illogical, yet being powerless to resist it. This conflict between logical thought and impulsive response is central to the human experience. If we consider our species to be a work in progress, this conflict marks a transitional phase in the evolution of the brain.

Neuroscience has taught us each hemisphere of the human cortex is broadly specialized for different functions, abilities and thinking styles. We appear to have evolved with the ability to think both sequentially and simultaneously, using left and right sides of the brain respectively. Different emotions also seem to involve different hemispheres.

Early MRI studies clearly demonstrated that the cerebral activity of highly anxious patients tended to congregate on one side of the brain. This has been verified in studies showing positive, or happy, emotions largely involve the left hemisphere, while anger, sadness and anxiety reside within the right hemisphere. [\(62\)](#)

Neuroscientists continue to debate why we have separate seats of emotion. Some theorize that since each of the brain’s hemispheres is responsible for a different form of muscle control (e.g.: the right hemisphere drives the large motor functions while the left hemisphere drives smaller muscle movements), increased activity within the right hemisphere prepares us for fight or flight, while activity in the left might be associated with smaller, more soothing motions.

As psychologist Robert Ornstein remarks, "If running were controlled by one specific neural system, it would make more sense to put the emotions that are associated with running, in moving the arms, fighting or fleeing, in the same area of the brain."

He adds, "The right hemisphere’s control over the large muscle systems allows us to move quickly and to avoid trouble, while the left hemisphere's control over small muscle systems allows us to approach things we are happy about." [\(63\)](#)

One example of this would be punching out a motorist who cuts you off on the way to work (right hemisphere). Another could be caressing the one you love (left hemisphere).

However heated and confusing as the argument might be, though, what was lacking for a long time was a practical approach to changing an individual's experience. Now, NLP's ability to function as a meta-psychology (the ability to examine and explain what lies beyond the facts and laws of psychology) gives competent practitioners the means to create, test and develop effective techniques based upon observations such as Ornstein's above.

Even if it is impossible to conclusively prove that what one person feels as anger or fear is the same as another's, the principles of NLP provide you with an ever-increasing range of tools to change and optimize your own subjective experience. In order to do that, you need to recognize the uniqueness of each experience. What—and, more specifically, *how*—you feel and experience is what's important. Nobody else's perception or interpretation matters as much as your own. Let us repeat that because this is a key concept: if change is the objective, ***how you feel anything is much more important than why.***



## **EXERCISE 5:**

### **INSTANT AFFECT SWITCH**

1. Think of someone or something that causes you mild irritation.

Scale the intensity of your feeling from 1 to 10.

2. Sit or stand with straight spine.

Look up, a little above the horizon line, and slightly to the right.

3. Still holding the thought of the source of your irritation, begin to tap the fingers of your right hand rhythmically on your right knee.

Movement on either side of the body is controlled by, and affects, the opposite hemisphere.

4. After a few moments, check the intensity of your feelings.

If they have not yet significantly reduced, start tapping your right foot. Repeat from step 2 and continue until you can comfortably think of the person or event that caused a few mild irritation.

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Before NLP emerged, a number of thinkers, including Albert Korzybski, Gregory Bateson and Marshall McLuhan, made some inspired guesses about the way people built their mental representations. Early developers of Neuro-Linguistic Programming refined and formalized the process, giving change-workers an unprecedented tool: the ability to get inside the thinking process and change how it all took place.

Initially, the focus was on sensory-based thinking, that is, how people used pictures, words, feelings, tastes and smells (the five senses, or sensory modalities) to sample and process information from the external world. Changing the sequence of these could change the subjective experience.

Then a major breakthrough: the discovery that each modality possessed specific qualities and distinctions. Mental pictures could be in color or black and white, still or moving, large or small; sounds could be loud or soft, strident or soothing, emanate from inside or outside the head. Physical sensations ([kinesthetics](#)) could occur in different parts of the body, be global or localized, seem smooth and mellifluous, or sharp and distressing. The differences fell into two broad categories:

- 1) Digital—that is either one way or another, like a light switch;
- 2) Analog—changing along an unbroken continuum, similar to a light dimmer.

Again, finding the most important sub-modality and changing that (e.g., switching a picture from color to black and white; or altering the tonality of self-talk from nagging and strident to soft and sexy) could dramatically shift how the individual experienced his or her “reality”. Notice that no attempt need be made to change the content of the picture or the actual words of the internal monologue.



These secondary qualities became known as sub-modalities (see [Appendix B](#) for further examples).

## **SUB-MODALITIES**

It became obvious to observers that when a subject used clarifying gestures and/or made statements such as “I just need to get a little distance from my problems”, or “My responsibilities are weighing me down”, they were speaking literally, rather than metaphorically. They actually experienced the internal representation of their problem as being too close to them, or weighing down on them from above.

More recently, another pattern was observed. Clients often gestured in a way that suggested that what they were feeling had movement. The way they moved their hands implied that the feeling they were talking about started somewhere in their bodies, and moved somewhere else. Frequently, the end of the feeling would connect up with the beginning and run continuously as a loop. The loop, it was noted, can spin in only one of four ways along the axes of the body: vertically forwards or backwards, and horizontally clockwise or anti-clockwise.

Knowledge of the above provides powerful yet simple tools for significant change. The lesson is elementary. Tweaking the sub-modalities changes the sensory modalities, which, in turn, brings about profound change in subjective experience. Or, by changing the direction of the spin, you change the physical or emotional experience as well.



### **EXERCISE 6:**

#### **PUTTING A NEW SPIN ON OLD FEELINGS**

1. Think of an unpleasant experience that has irritated you for some time.

Notice where the feeling starts in the body, and where it seems to go. If it dissipates, connect the end to the beginning and make it run as a loop. If you continue to run it in this direction, or make it faster and stronger, the feeling will almost certainly intensify. So, instead ...

2. Reverse the direction of the spin.

If you find it difficult to change the way it moves, push it out of the body first, change its direction, and pull it back in.

3. Run it faster.

Make it spread throughout the body. Enjoy the changes this brings about.

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## **THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION**

Your body and mind work together as a system. The feelings you have about a particular problem or condition are the sum result of your history with it. In other words, the *why*. You get that feeling because you have experienced, seen or learned it at sometime in your past. But, the *why* becomes irrelevant if your objective is simply to change how you react. Rather than wasting time and energy analyzing your experience, it is far more likely that if you change the structure of the experience, that is *how* you respond to it, you may change the condition itself.

For example, nausea and vomiting are continuing problems in surgery and can cause choking and even death on the operating table. The use of powerful pain-killing and anaesthetizing drugs substantially increases the risks.

Dr Khalid Hasan, a consultant anesthetist in Birmingham, England, is accustomed to chatting with patients prior to surgery in an effort to calm and reassure. He does so using many of the techniques of NLP.

“On one occasion, I was talking to a woman who had a long history of reacting to anesthetics by vomiting violently,” he says. “As she recalled her past experiences, I noticed she kept making the

same gesture. She'd position her hands, palms facing her abdomen, and then move them both rapidly upwards and outwards to illustrate the violence of the vomiting.

"After she'd done this several times, I was fairly confident that this reflected both her fear and the memory of the body sensation she'd experienced during previous bouts of vomiting."

Dr Hasan's solution was to continue speaking reassuringly to his patient, using the tonality of his voice and his rate of speech to pace her experience and calm her down.

"As I talked, I made the same gesture she made, but in reverse. I used my hands to support what I was telling her: that not everyone had the same response; that because she'd had upsetting experiences in the past, it didn't necessarily mean she'd have the same experience now, and that, as she relaxed more and more, the tendency to gag and vomit would diminish and disappear, and so on.

"All the time, I used my hand movements to reverse her gesture, watching her closely as she relaxed. I also suggested that she'd have less pain than she expected, and would recover much faster."

The woman underwent surgery without incident. She had neither nausea, nor an impulse to vomit. Furthermore, she needed less post-operative medication, and was up and about sooner than both she and her surgeon expected. [\(64\)](#)

This example makes it clear that people add or subtract information to create their models of the world according to their individual filters. Filters as previously mentioned are our beliefs, values, experiences and expectations etc. They represent our version of reality. Revising how you process information will quickly and easily change your experience related to it.

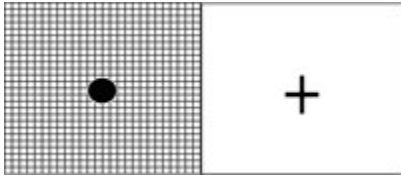
As we said at the start of this chapter, the Efficiency Principle, is a biological, rather than a psychological, phenomenon. The brain has evolved to take short cuts to conserve energy. It looks for what it already knows from experience, and will even manufacture facts according to the probability of something being true. This is true of all five senses. What you expect is what you will hear, feel, taste, smell, and especially see.



## EXERCISE 7:

### BLINDSPOT

Let's illustrate this. Most people are familiar with the ideal of a blind spot. Because of the way the optic nerve exits your eyeball, there is a large "hole" in our visual field. You can test this for yourself.



Caption: Blind spot testing card

1. Hold the picture in front of your face and close your right eye.
2. With your left eye, look at the cross to the right of the picture.
3. Move and tilt the picture until the black dot on the left seems to disappear.

This is your blind spot.

Hold on. You are not done yet. As you repeat the steps above, notice something a little short of bizarre. There's no white space where the black dot once was. There's no negative space in the area the object once occupied. The background is unbroken.

What happened? From the surrounding background, your brain instantaneously calculated the probability of the background extending behind the absent object and simply filled it in. This is just one intriguing example of how your brain supplements "reality" and creates experience.

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### **EXERCISE 8: MEMORY RECALL**

Let's try another experiment. Read the following words aloud (or, better yet, have someone else read them to you):

BEDREST

AWAKE

TIRED

DREAM

NIGHT

COMFORT

SOUND

SLUMBER

SNORE

NAP

SNOOZE

## REST

Now, look away from this page. Take a piece of paper and write down as many of the words as you can remember in 15 seconds. Resist the temptation to cheat. This is a demonstration, not a test. Please, do not read further until you have completed the above exercise.

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Chances are you included the word 'sleep'. If not, congratulate yourself. Most people's brains organize around the likeliest associations with what they see, hear or feel. Therefore most people remember having read the word sleep even though it isn't on the list.

The Western mantra of skepticism, "I'll believe it when I see it" should be revised to, "I'll see it when I believe it." The second statement would be far more accurate, given the fact that your brain likes pictures. In fact, as far as we can tell your brain can only make sense of the world through pictures. Furthermore, to conserve energy, your brain will do two things:

One, make a picture according to what it is already familiar with; and (often) two, present that picture as if it is true.

Fear, therefore, comes from the pictures you make, the feelings ([kinesthetics](#)) you have and how you respond to them. In the second part of this book, you'll be able to experiment with optimizing your life through these, and a number of other, principles and techniques of "using your brain for a change".



BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, write down the answers to the following questions:

1. What feelings do you have regularly that make you feel good?

2. What feelings do you have that make you feel bad?
3. What do you most fear happening?
4. What do you most fear *not* happening?
5. What stops you from moving towards your objectives?
6. When you feel fear:

Where about in your body do you feel it? What are its characteristics (sub-modalities)? What does it do? Does it move? Where?

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: KNOWING, BELIEVING AND UNDERSTANDING**

In this chapter:

- Thinking by design;
  - Is it appropriate?
  - Data versus Inference: knowing the difference;
  - Creating beliefs worth having.
-



“If you understand everything, you must be misinformed.”

Japanese proverb

If reality is what you believe, how do you know what’s true? This question actually requires you answer the questions we posed in [Chapter Four](#). For review, those questions are:

1. What feelings do you have regularly that make you feel good?
2. What feelings do you have that make you feel bad?
3. What do you most fear happening?
4. What do you most fear not happening?
5. What stops you from moving towards your objectives?
6. When you feel fear, where about in your body do you feel it?
  - a. What are its characteristics (sub-modalities)?
  - b. What does it do?

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## EXERCISE 9:

### KNOWING, FEELING AND BELIEVING

Before continuing, review the above questions and your responses. Then add the following question to each and write down your response to it as it relates to the original question.

1. What do you believe that makes this true?

Example:

2. What feelings do I have regularly that make me feel good?

Accomplishment, admiration, happiness etc...

3. What do I believe that makes this true?

Being recognized enhances my life. I can rise to challenges. I am a talented and deserving person, etc...

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Lurking at the edge of every feeling is a belief. That is, something justifies the feeling in a way that makes sense to you. You might report that when you are walking home alone at night and feel your heart beating and your stomach churning, you are anxious—or, more accurately, you *believe* you are anxious. The belief is built on previous experiences within the context of your life. You can have the same experience in an alternate context with wholly different results. For example your heart beats and your stomach churns when your favorite football team is playing an important game. In this context, you believe you are excited.

Most people end up feeling bad not because they are bad and deserve to suffer, but because they hold beliefs that fail to support life-affirming ideas. Life affirming beliefs include:

- Feeling good doesn't have to be an accident;
- Feeling good doesn't have to be earned;

- Just because I believe something (especially the bad stuff about me) doesn't necessarily mean it is true;
- I can change my beliefs and my feelings at will.

Psychiatrists tend to be skeptical about the claim that people can fundamentally change their thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Some see their role as helping their patients adjust to reality, or to provide drugs designed to take the edge off any unpleasant feelings reality may cause. This is ignorance working in a highly destructive way because it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what *thinking* is.

Outside of NLP, thinking is profoundly misunderstood. Psychologists talk about thoughts as if they are objects, like marbles inside a sack.

It is not that you have thoughts; ***it is that you think.***

You process various pieces of information every second. These consist of pictures, words, feelings, sounds, tastes and smells. Your brain takes all this random information, configures the components in certain sequences, then runs them to generate the outcome we call experience. An experience can be a feeling, response, or behavior. It can also be an opinion or a belief. If we alter the components, in size, distance, location and however they are presented in our mind, or the direction in which they move, we change the experience itself.

Imagine the possibilities if you could cultivate and reinforce a compelling belief that *you can learn just about anything at any time*. If you held that belief, the outcome of any technique you apply would be automatically enhanced, in much the same way a seed planted in fertile soil will flourish better than one dropped on stony ground. Now change "held" to "have" and you are on your way.



## **EXERCISE 10:**

### **ACCELERATED LEARNING PATTERN**

#### Learning to Learn

1. Find the belief that stands in your way of learning new things easily.

See, hear and feel yourself trying, but not accomplishing, your objective. You'll probably be able to find many examples from when you were at school. Notice all the qualities of the pictures you make. Are they in color? How big are they? Are they moving or still? Where are they situated in your visual field? ([See Appendix B](#) for further inspiration). Write down your observations so you can be systematic in your work.

2. Find a strong and useful belief about something at which you already excel.

Examine its qualities, the same way as above.

3. Compare the two, noting the differences.

Pay particular attention to the size of each image, its position in your mental space, and whether or not it involves movement.

4. Push the image off into the distance until it is little more than a pinprick,

Shift it across to line up with your positive belief, and then snap it back towards you into its new position, shifting all the original sub-modalities to match those of supreme confidence and proficiency. See yourself dropping into a profoundly relaxed state where you absorb information easily and are prepared to explore and practice your new skills with deep commitment. Now, step into the scenario and experience it as fully as possible, amplifying everything you see, hear and feel.

5. Repeat this exercise several times over a period of about a week.

Notice and keep a record of the changes you notice.

It is unlikely that you'll suddenly develop an overwhelming conviction that you can learn anything at any time with no effort. However, as the belief blocking you moves off into the distance, it leaves room for a new attitude to take root and grow.

This simple exercise demonstrates how easily we can change the quality of an experience by altering its structure. Knowing how to do this is half the battle. The knowing what needs to be changed and when to change it, is the other half.

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In practicing NLP we never categorize thoughts as good or bad (a common approach in psychology, philosophical studies and mainline religions). Rather, we approach thoughts as being appropriate or inappropriate, useful or wasteful, productive or unproductive. In NLP our question is whether a specific thought is fit for purpose: that is, does it give you what you want and need?

Pause here and jot down three to five of your strongest beliefs. These should all relate to you and your relationship with other people and the world.

Now, going through each item on your list, ask yourself:

Does this support me and the people around me?

Is it fit for purpose?

Or, do I find it brings me into conflict with myself or others?

The people who come to us for help are often unhappy because they believe something detrimental to their well-being. They believe they cannot do or be something they ought to. Or, on the other hand, they believe they are something, or are doing something, they shouldn't. Underlying that is another belief: that it is difficult or impossible, to change.

One of the problems about beliefs is that they are self-validating. That's to say, just because you believe something, you automatically think it is true and seldom put it to test.

Ask almost anyone how they know something is true, and they will say one of three things:

"I feel it is true."

"I believe it is true."

“I know it is true.”

Each phrase has a slightly different meaning or, more accurately, a different impact on your internal experience. People will react accordingly, often without pausing to analyze their response. Feeling something is true is less authoritative than believing it is true. People will often add the word “just” to the statement, as in, “I just feel it is true.” The “just” is significant to the underlying meaning of the communication. It almost always signals that the speaker has come to the edge of his conscious model of understanding. It is just the way it is, because it just is ...

Believing something is emphatic. Such beliefs require critical attention, yet beliefs are seldom questioned by the believer, and other people’s beliefs are often regarded as either sacrosanct or a threat to our survival. Therefore, people either accept without question someone’s rights to hold a particular belief, or they feel justified in attacking or even killing him for holding a particular belief.

Consider beliefs once considered true that science and challenging the received wisdom have proven false:

- The earth is flat
  
- The sun revolves around the earth
  
- Women are incapable of understanding politics, finance and other difficult subjects
  
- Women determine the sex of a baby

“ \_\_\_\_ (pick your ethnic/religious group) are (savages, terrorists, sub-human, less intelligent) and only understand force.”

- Only those of noble birth are fit to lead and rule

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You can probably add a few more from your own life experiences. The point is every single above 'truth', through questioning, experimentation and/or science, eventually found itself disproved. What was believed and purported to be true proved false. The perception, the received wisdom, was not reality. This illustrates the importance of constantly questioning and testing beliefs. Falsehoods, no matter how strongly held, once exposed, can initiate profound change. The same is true for your own beliefs about yourself and the impact each has on your life.

Strongly held beliefs inevitably lead to a feeling people describe as 'knowing'. To believe and know are often used interchangeably, yet are seldom directly challenged.

One of Tony Blair's closest allies said the former British Prime Minister was confident that he had made the "right" decision to join President George W. Bush in the invasion of Iraq because of his religious beliefs. (65) Bush himself was widely regarded as being similarly motivated. The argument here is not whether the decision was right or wrong, but whether beliefs without verifiable data to support them are a sound basis for important decisions and actions.

However, because a belief feels familiar and comforting, people tend to act accordingly and are prepared vigorously to defend their beliefs solely because they believe them to be true. This is circular thinking (I believe it is true; it is true because I believe it). The result of circular thinking and its variations can be to block commonsensical investigation and cause untold hurt and harm.

Getting out of this mess requires an understanding of the cognitive process that moves seamlessly and unnoticed from the level of experience to that of behavior. You need first to be aware that experience (some disturbance of the nervous system) occurs at a wordless (pre-linguistic), level. Millions of these experiences occur every second of every day without interrupting your state of awareness. Only if the disturbance is great enough, will it be brought into your conscious awareness. This level too, is pre-linguistic.

Once you attempt to describe to yourself or others, what it is that you are feeling, you are labeling your previously wordless experience according to your particular experience and cultural traditions. This is where problems and confusion often begin.

The moment you label a subjective experience, you move away from direct experience and start to categorize it in a manner that is logical to you, giving it an existence of its own. By nominalizing your fear, anger, love etc., you reinforce the idea that each exists as an independent object or thing.

The next step is ascribing meaning or a consequence to your chosen words. You think, "This is bad. Here I go again. I just cannot control myself."

If it is a good feeling, you might think, "Oh, this is great. I hope this lasts."

Or should pessimism intrude, "I do not trust this. I know it will go away and I'll feel bad all over again."

If you ask anyone to explain their feelings of happiness, depression, love and so on, they tend to add yet another layer of words. This is inference or evaluation. They overlay their core experience with words that are commonly judgmental or self-deprecating.

For example:

"I feel this way and it is bad";

"I keep losing my temper and it is wrong";

"I've been diagnosed as having depression and that means I am sick";

"I sometimes think I see things that are not there, therefore I am going crazy".

Notice how the further you move down the ladder of reasoning, the greater the inference and the further you are from your pure experience.

Asking someone to try to explain why he or she is feeling down often further complicates the situation, since negative thoughts (and people are seldom short of these) can feed back to the level above and intensify the unwanted experience. This looping of negativity or unresourceful self-talk is characteristic of depressive conditions. The person feels bad; talking about it (to himself or other people) increases the unpleasant feeling, which prompts him to think or speak about it more, which makes him feel worse, and so he finds new words to describe his experience ... and he continues spiraling even deeper down into despondency, with no end in sight.

Consider this chain of events and how your inferences affect it.



Imagine having stomach pain and it fails to respond to Alka-Seltzer®. The thought occurs to you that your father and one of his brothers suffered from stomach ulcers. Simply remembering their suffering causes your own stomach churn and the pain to worsen. Then, that word, 'Cancer', comes to mind; suddenly you feel even worse. After a while, you go to your doctor who says you have Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and will need to take certain drugs to help you cope with your problem. You begin to notice that you have some degree of discomfort most of the time. This makes sense because now you have a diagnosis to back it up. You have "a condition", but, of course, you do not want friends and colleagues to know. It is a weakness that you have to hide ...

The first part of the chain of events is simply a sensation of discomfort in your stomach that you identify as 'pain'. Think of this as experience and observation.

#### Inference 1

When it fails to respond to taking an antacid, due to experiences within your past, you think that it might be a stomach ulcer.

#### Inference 2

The pain worsens. You entertain the thought that it might be cancer, anxiety increases and the pain gets even worse.

#### Inference 3

Your doctor diagnoses Irritable Bowel Syndrome, a condition heavily advertised by a pharmaceutical manufacturer that you have read about. You begin to notice that your digestive system is not always comfortable, lending credence to his diagnosis.

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As you process each of your evaluations, you are likely to experience greater stress. This loops back to the original experience (the feeling of some discomfort in your stomach) and, in all likelihood, the feeling of not-quite-rightness increases, triggering new evaluations (e.g., it is getting worse), and you drop even deeper into dysfunction and despair.

Now suppose you read someone's evaluation on the Internet that says IBS is incurable and that you'll have it for life.

What are you feeling now?

The words inference and evaluation are similar in meaning to assumption, interpretation, conjecture, appraisal, judgment, estimation and assessment. However elegant the inference or evaluation, though, we need to remind ourselves that it is never the same as the experience or the wordless observation of the original event.

Your problem becomes more complicated when you try to explain what you are feeling to someone else. Even if this person replies with, "Oh, yes—I know exactly what you are feeling", he cannot and is not. In a world where words function as the primary currency, this is a difficult concept to accept; the concept that whatever you say a thing is, it is never what it actually is. However, in order to resolve problems, to progress and prosper, this is exactly the concept everyone must accept.

Experiences occur without words. The first stirring of something that is different from the fallback state of our nervous system is a fact; but it doesn't yet have a description or a diagnosis. Whatever it is, it just is. We can experience without using language. To some degree, we can even observe what we experience without using language. However, the moment we begin to describe or comment on what is happening, either to ourselves or to someone else, we begin to remove portions of the process of the experience and replace it with content. This new content is likely to be speculative; we begin to use different parts of the brain ... and not necessarily the parts best equipped to solve the problem.

The value of sub-modalities is that they occur at a level somewhere between the awareness of an experience and the inferences and evaluations we make about that event. It is impossible to talk about subjective experience in its purest form; experiencing it is all we can do. But, noticing the qualities of the experience before we start identifying and categorizing gives us sensory-based data far closer to the reality of the experience—and are therefore more conducive to change.

Beliefs, which represent a part of your mental maps, are entirely different than verifiable data. Neither is better or worse than the other. What is important is that you can distinguish accurately between the two.

George Patton, the legendary US general, recalls in his memoirs coming across an armored division on a road near the French town of Coutances during the Second World War.

The men told him they had not crossed the Sienne because they were studying a map of the terrain but had not yet found a place where the river could be forded.

Patton told the men that he had just waded across, that the water was no more than two feet deep and the area was poorly defended by only one, very inaccurately fired, machine gun.

He repeated the Japanese proverb, "One look is worth 100 reports", and then proceeded to lay into the men for their failure to investigate personally. The lesson, he observed drily, was quickly learned, and from then on they were "a very great division". [\(66\)](#)

As Patton helped his men understand the quality of a map (and whether we use it) will affect how we feel about the experience and how we respond to it. This then, can directly impact the original experience for better or worse. Direct experience, however, usually trumps the best-drawn map.

Learning to look for yourself, as Patton urged, to use your senses (sensory acuity) effectively to gather information, assists in inoculating you against stupid and dangerous judgments. In other words, awareness is a way to prevent your brain from acting on what has gone before. Being able to distinguish evaluation from experience and observed fact is a powerful tool. It is an essential tool, a tool used intuitively by people accustomed to Being Happy.

These concepts may seem abstract and confusing. Do not worry if they do not make sense yet. They will. Hang in there. You are learning. It may feel a little weird right now.

Remember the story at the beginning of this book where Dr Tippu told his doctor, "I am not denying the seriousness of my situation; I am just denying that I cannot get better."

Tippu declined to accept the assumption that he could not or would not recover based upon the evaluation or the perceived seriousness of his condition. Rather he sidestepped the suggestion and inserted a suggestion of his own. His brain decided that 'getting better' was a possibility that he was not prepared to give up. In doing so, he opened himself to an entirely new range of responses and behaviors, each orientated towards healing and health rather than fate or defeat.

The first step in freeing yourself from the tyranny of destructive criticism (whether it comes from other people or is self-generated) is to be able to distinguish between a verifiable fact and an

inference or evaluation. It is a new skill and may seem a little challenging at first, but we'll walk you through it. Once you develop this skill, you will recognize your verbal maps as second-hand maps. If they fail adequately to represent the territory, they will have poor predictability and limited or detrimental effects. You will simply discard these bad maps and replace them with good ones.

Let us start to develop that skill right now by looking at some of the differences between fact and inference or evaluation.

### **FACTS VERSUS INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS**

The following summary lists a few differences.

**FACTS:** do not go beyond your own observation

**INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS:** go beyond personal observation.

**FACTS:** are sensory-based (what you can see, hear, touch, taste, smell for yourself)

**INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS:** tend to have limited sensory-based information.

**FACTS:** are verifiable—that is, would be substantiated by any reasonable witness

**INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS:** are not verifiable, but are accepted on faith.

**FACTS:** are usually repeatable (that is, testable)

**INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS:** are not testable

**FACTS:** are either about the past or exist in present experience

**INFERENCES/EVALUATIONS:** are about the future, which is often extrapolated from the past

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A short-cut to distinguishing facts from inferences is to ask whether any sensible, independent eyewitness would agree with your statement. For example the statement, “He’s speaking louder than the person he’s with” is factual. “He’s shouting because he’s angry” is not.

Granted, he could be angry. But he might equally be hard of hearing and need to speak loudly in order to hear his own voice. He could also be posturing, trying to draw attention to the conversation, be attempting to drown out the woman with the high piercing voice behind him, or maybe he’s drunk. The fact is you do not know *why* (the inference) he is speaking loudly. You only know the fact of the matter. He’s speaking louder than the person he is with. Fact versus inference and evaluation; there’s a significant difference.

The following exercise is challenging, but is worth repeating from time to time. It will sharpen your skills and it requires two to three people.



## **EXERCISE 11:**

### **THE VIDEOCAM PATTERN**

Distinguishing Fact from Inference

1. Sit opposite your partner while a third person (if available) acts as observer/judge.

Think of yourself as a video camera. You can record and play back anything you see or hear, but cannot register internal feelings or make judgments.

2. Look at your partner. Make ten to twenty factual statements about your partner based on what you see, smell, hear, taste or touch.

Either your partner or the observer can object if you include inferences or feelings/emotions. Take great care with this.

“You are wearing a shirt” is acceptable.

“You are wearing a nice shirt” is not.

3. Now comment on ten to twenty things about your partner that are unverifiable, but that you think might be true.

Either your partner or the judge can disagree.

4. Continue until you, your partner and the judge are comfortable that you can easily tell the difference between each category of statement.

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## **HOW TO MOVE BEYOND LIMITATIONS**

Thoughts and beliefs that can limit you have a way of suddenly materializing from the depths of your unconscious. The speed and regularity at which this happens leads many people to believe they are powerless to resist. This is far from true. Part of learning how to take charge of your life lies in catching an unresourceful, unproductive or damaging thought or belief early while knowing how to respond.

EXAMPLE:

**Unproductive thought:** “I am so depressed today.”

Avoid inviting unsubstantiated beliefs by asking questions of yourself, such as, “Why do I feel this way?” This will only lead to further inference and abstraction in the form of speculation after speculation, deepening the pain and despair.

## **CHANGING AN UNPRODUCTIVE THOUGHT INTO A RESOURCEFUL QUESTION**

How do I know I am depressed?

What has happened (facts) to let me know I feel this way?

How could I teach someone else (process) to get this result by doing what I am doing?

In order to answer these questions, you must use your senses. The information you are seeking must be grounded and easily understood by an impartial observer. It is not acceptable to add further levels of inference and evaluation, such as, “I feel bad” or “it is scary”.

It is acceptable to say, "When I am depressed it seems as though a heavy grey cloud is hanging over me and I cannot see my way through to the future. This gives me a cold, empty feeling in the pit of my stomach.”

While we are aware that internally experienced grey clouds and cold, empty feelings cannot be seen by an impartial observer, these descriptions are closer to fact than feeling “bad” and something being ‘scary’. Cold and empty are fairly specific descriptions, derived from your senses and they occur fairly close to the actual experience. Bad and scary are vague and open to interpretation, and occur further down the chain of evaluation.

Factual words and phrases reveal more than inferences and evaluations about how you create or structure the experience of “depress-*ing*”. According to the factual statement above, you would first need to create the heaviness, color and impenetrability of a cloud, followed by a sensation known to you as cold and empty, in order to know you are having the experience you label as depression.

Challenging the verifiability of a belief is one thing. It is another to be able to exchange an unresourceful belief for one that’s more useful. Few people have the ability to move from the first state to the second in a single leap. The gap between the two is often too wide. Doing so via a transitional step, such as indifference, proves a lot easier.



## **EXERCISE 12:**

### **CHANGING AN UNRESOURCEFUL BELIEF**

1. Identify a belief about yourself or your capabilities that you would like to change.

Say the belief aloud. For example, "I get too stressed at work."

2. Ask yourself, "How do I know this?" and "What happens inside me when I get too stressed?"

Write down your answers, using sensory-based words and phrases. Call this state A.

3. Now, ask yourself, "How would I like to be instead of too stressed at work?"

This is about your ideal. How would I like to behave or respond? What would be different and better? Write it down. Be specific. What will you be seeing, hearing and feeling in your preferred state? Rather than having "no stress", think in terms of coping easily and elegantly with challenge. Create as rich and internal representation of the state as possible, paying special attention to how you'll be feeling when you access it. Attach to this a descriptive word or affirmative sentence, such as, "I cope easily and creatively with all challenges." Call this state C.

4. Take a little time now to identify or create an intermediate state somewhere between being stressed (A) and your preferred state or response (C).

If the characteristics of this intermediate state are vague or ambiguous, it may help to mentally place yourself in a situation that is fairly demanding but to which you have either a mild or an indifferent response - say, a horror movie that engages your attention, but is never really fully believable. Once again, describe this on paper, using rich, sensory-based information. Call this state (B).

5. Next, mentally step into your situation (A). For the last time, feel what "too stressed" is to you.

Notice how your heart beats for your pulse races, how your stomach churns, how your breathing becomes fast and shallow. At the same time, imagine you are pulling back as if inside a giant slingshot, really amplifying the feeling of tension, getting ready to let go.

6. Aiming at the state you have labeled (B), count 1-2-3. On the count of 3, let go.



Feel yourself lurch forward at light speed, hear the whoosh of the air rushing past your ears as you rocket, first, into (B), then bounce off at twice the speed towards and into (C).

7. Finally, fully immerse yourself in all the qualities you identified in your preferred state.

See this situation through the eyes of someone who is actually there. Feel what they are feeling; hear what they are hearing, including whatever self-talk you can invent that will help develop the richness of your experience. Amplify all the details to the point where you respond exactly as you want to and achieve what you desire. You identified the optimal outcome at the beginning of this exercise. Now experience yourself achieving it.

Take a deep breath and allow the changes to flow through every organ, every system, and every cell of your body. These changes are now a part of you, something you own, in the same way that you own your shoes or the color of your eyes.

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BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER make a list of your most strongly held beliefs and opinions. Subject each to the 'reliable witness' test described in the Videocam exercise. Ask yourself if several reliable observers would come to the same opinion as you, should they observe dispassionately. For example, when your mother punished you repeatedly as a child, was she being abusive, was she trying to prevent you from behaving inappropriately in later life ... or, was she simply spanking you and sending you to your room?

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## CHAPTER SIX: THE USE AND ABUSE OF MEMORY

In this chapter:

- Problems with PTSD;
  - Trauma by proxy;
  - Understanding the Rashomon Effect;
  - How the helpless lose hope.
- 

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the idea that you can take unpleasant and disturbing memories and make them different, while not necessarily removing them from your memory bank. Rather, you can change them so you do not recall in such disturbing detail. At the same time, you will be able to set things up so you remember the good stuff in greater detail.

Charlie M. was a classic case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Several psychiatrists decided he met all six of the criteria laid down in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), the psychotherapist's bible. Like thousands of people engulfed in the horror of the attack on New York's World Trade Center in 2001, he was left in serious emotional turmoil and pain.

Speaking to mental health professionals, Charlie M. recalled, "Whenever I sleep, I have nightmares about the planes crashing into those two buildings, those people jumping from windows, the ash everywhere. When I am awake, I get these flashbacks of it happening. The fear is paralyzing. I feel as though I have no control. Sometimes I feel as though I am actually going to open my eyes and find I am really back there at Ground Zero. I also can't even imagine getting back into a plane to fly anywhere."

Listening to Charlie M's statement immediately creates a sense of empathy. Billions of people worldwide watched in horror as the events unfolded in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington DC that day. It is easy to understand how living through such an event could cause nightmares. The problem? Charlie M. was 3700 miles (6000 km) away from Ground Zero at the time of the attack. He only became aware of it hours after the event. He had no personal connection to the attack. None of his friends or relatives was involved in the disaster and Charlie M. has never visited New York City. Yet, despite this, Charlie M. was diagnosed with PTSD and treated with anti-anxiety drugs and beta-blockers in an effort to control his symptoms.

Charlie M. is one of a growing number of people who are being incorrectly diagnosed with, and being treated for, PTSD. He is not alone. An extensive study reveals that thousands of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are given the wrong diagnosis and treatment. This study notes that up to 80% of the alleged sufferers of PTSD were unable to name a single trauma that could have caused it. [\(67\)](#)

Nevertheless, diagnosis and treatment of PTSD continues along much the same lines in both the United States and the United Kingdom, despite the fact that pressure is growing for a redefinition of the condition. Even Boston University psychologist David Barlow, one of the experts who developed the original DSM definition in 1994, admits that developments in neuroscience cast doubt on the way the condition is presently understood.

Charlie's experience prompts us to ask, how can an individual recall the attack on the World Trade Center so clearly that its memory is more vivid than the memory of an event the person experienced at first hand, such as the birth of a child? Why should an individual be able to recall almost every detail about where she was when she heard the news of the Twin Towers attack, or Princess Diana's death, even if she was nowhere near New York or Paris at the time?

It is pretty clear that there is strong survival value in being able to remember and fear events that could threaten your life. The twin emotions of sudden shock and fear create an imprint of the horrific event. This response, called flashbulb memory by psychologists, is not confined to events of national or international importance. Shock and surprise can not only imprint memories of a specific incident, but also of events immediately before and afterwards. Your brain does not take chances.

In one study, researchers found that pictures of ordinary objects in extraordinary combinations, such as the head of a plumber's wrench fixed on a sheep's body, also created vivid and lasting memories. [\(68\)](#) Another study used images of snakes to shock and surprise students who were

studying online. In tests administered immediately afterwards, the students who were surprised averaged 28% better marks than those in a control group who were not surprised. The memories were also enhanced for the parts of the learning modules immediately before and after the surprise event. (69)

Major news events such as the attacks of September 11, 2001 have been shown by a major British survey to be remembered in photographic detail by 82% of the people surveyed, whereas only 65% of them could as vividly remember the birth of a first child. The survey found that 81% of participants remembered who told them about the attacks on the Twin Towers; 84% remembered what time it was when they heard the news; 92% recalled exactly where they were at the time, and 71% remembered what they were doing at the time. The researchers described the level of recollection as “extraordinary”, especially considering the survey was carried out nearly a decade after the event. (70)

Time does little to extinguish these emotion-laden memories. More than 45 years after the assassination of John F Kennedy, half of the people old enough to remember the tragedy were able to recall where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. (71) It should come as no surprise that personal shock and tragedy are even more likely to be imprinted. In fact, so protective is this mechanism that some people will generalize out a specific incident into a group of broadly similar situations, presumably to improve the person’s defenses.

Here’s how it works. A person develops a fear of flying after a particularly bumpy flight. Later this same person extends the fear response to trains, cars, elevators and any other confined space involving movement. In this example, all confined, moving objects become the catalysts of fear.

Agoraphobia, the fear of open or public spaces is an example of another over-generalization. This condition leads the person to believe that everything outside his or her home is a potential threat. Because of this fear, a person with agoraphobia decides it is safer to stay home.

Usually, these processes occur subconsciously. Parts of your brain, especially the prefrontal cortex, continually scan the environment, both external and internal. Throughout this process your brain interprets billions of bits of data and decides whether to respond or not.

Heightened stress, the tendency of your brain to fall back on patterns it already knows, and the generalized nature of an imprint can pattern-match something that is happening now to something that happened in the distant past, even without you noticing it consciously. This

process can trigger a panic response. If it perceives a threat, real or imaginary, it fires up your fight-or-flight responses in order to optimize your chances of survival

These discoveries are enriching science's understanding of how bad things happen to people. However, science seldom responds with strategies to make people good again—excepting in most cases when there is an incentive to explore the development of more drugs.

Mainstream psychologists have found it difficult to deal with PTSD, largely because they fail to understand how the process actually works. The concept of a symptom being protective rather than a problem to be exterminated is abhorrent to them. Compounding this is the fact that emotion and instinct are now known to precede, rather than follow, thought by anything from a fraction of a second up to ten seconds. [\(72\)](#)

The other question as yet unanswered by science or psychology is, why should anyone respond as if they were personally involved in the drama, even if they weren't? Are they more vulnerable because of some chemical imbalance in their brain? Do they react this way because they were abused and unloved as a child?

We believe the reason is much simpler.

## **MIRROR NEURONS**

The discovery in the 1990s of a group of cells now known as “mirror neurons” may help to explain the following situations. Mirror neurons translate what you observe into what you feel by activating the same neural networks that would be involved if you were personally involved in the experience. Some researchers believe mirror neurons are the basis of animal and human empathy. V S Ramachandran, University of California neuroscientist and former Director of the *Center for Brain and Cognition*, suggests mirror neurons' development about 50,000 years ago may be responsible for what he calls “the great leap forward” in human cultural evolution.

An example of mirror neurons at work could be late night news casts and that scary dream that wakes you in a cold sweat in the middle of the night. News coverage today is instant, dramatic, repetitive and often designed to involve viewers as fully as possible, almost as if they are part of the experience of a plane crash, a terrorist attack or looming economic depression. For many years, hypnotists have been aware that people become particularly suggestible when their emotions are heightened and specific behaviors or suggestions are delivered vividly, emphatically

and repeatedly. Add to this the discovery that most people respond more powerfully to associated experiences (that is experiencing a scenario as if they are actually there) than to dissociated events or memories where they see themselves, as if on a screen or in a picture.

Your brain's astonishing ability to remember extraordinary events, either from a single traumatic exposure or through extended repetition, is a double-edged sword. While it shows us the way to make learning new skills easier and more durable, it also suggests that some imprints, particularly those that are driven by fear, may be more difficult to dislodge. Fear is powerful. Marketing experts and those programming executives know this well. Anyone who has studied marketing or communications learns that four of the most powerful appeals in advertising and public relations are 1) Fear 2) Guilt 3) Curiosity and 4) Humor.

Employ any of these, add repetition and you greatly increase the chance the message, image or idea entrenching in a person's brain. The principle works the same with news stories and other forms of communication.

The effect of negative hypnosis via the media is something you can mitigate right now through a few simple changes. What you focus on late at night tends to continue to run in your brain as you sleep and dream. Note how programming, ideas or information is pitched to you and choose your end-of-day images and experiences carefully. Limit the number of newscasts you watch and avoid watching these or any other disturbing programs just before you sleep. Being informed is one thing; being brain-washed is another.

## **APPETITIVE CONDITIONING & AVERSIVE CONDITIONING**

Neuroscience has confirmed that all fears, with the exception of the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises, are learned. Through neuroscience, we can also begin to understand how we learn our other fears.

All living organisms move away from toxins and other life-threatening conditions. This is known as aversive conditioning. Quite literally, the smallest single-cell organism learns how to survive by avoiding threats. Ivan Pavlov, the pioneering psychologist who trained his dogs to salivate at the sound of the bell, vividly demonstrated another form of conditioning through the pairing of two stimuli, one unconditioned (such as the sound of a bell) and the other conditioned, such as food (which causes salivation).

Pavlov demonstrated that, after a number of repetitions, simply ringing a bell could cause his dogs to salivate even if they weren't given food. Since the effect was linked to the desire for something (in this case food) he called this appetitive conditioning. It is appetitive conditioning that leads you to the supermarket to buy milk or bread, or to approach a partner or spouse in a particular way when you are hoping for sex. It is aversive conditioning that causes you to retch when confronted with a food that once made you ill, or to avoid the person who humiliated us when you asked for a date.

Unfortunately, conditioning is not always so predictable. Later research into the function of the amygdala, the part of your brain that acts as a portal to your fear/memory matrix, has shown that the brain may come to acclimatize to, and even prefer, certain stimuli related to fear or shock, a response that can last for a surprisingly long time. (73)

One of the more worrying aspects of fear conditioning is that it does not seem to require substantial repetition in order to lock it into place. In the early days of NLP researchers noticed some phobias were clear examples of one-pass learning. In many cases it required a single terrifying experience for the person to become phobic about any one of a number of triggers.

Phobias are unique in the realm of psychological problems for the simple reason that the sufferer never forgets to have the phobic response. In fact, extreme phobias can be triggered by simply talking about the feared object, or even by a picture. We recall one client with an acute phobia of snakes. Her fear was so strong she could not even look at the word written down on a piece of paper. She could only tolerate the letters S-N-A-K-E they were written down and scrambled.

This leads us to the question: can conditioned fear be reversed or undone?

To anyone proficient in NLP principles and techniques, this question presents no real problem. The definition of a condition is not the condition itself. Nor is it necessary that there be agreement as to why the condition should develop among some people and not among others, even though they might share the same experiences. Since NLP is about the how, rather than the why, what each sufferer is doing that causes him or her to respond in an unresourceful way is what is really important.

Charlie M., who we profiled earlier, is not alone. We have been approached by many people who developed anxiety disorders and phobias in the wake of September 11, 2001, even though they were not directly involved. The common factor is all of them watched in horror, hour after hour of television news coverage of the events in New York City. The same iconic images of aircrafts,

collapsing buildings, dust, smoke and people leaping to their death were played over and over again. Quite literally, their neurology began to respond as if they were actually at Ground Zero when the attack occurred.

We do not see the experiences of Charlie M. and others like him as a psychiatric issue, nor do we see it as a condition requiring some powerful psychotropic drug. True, some researchers are promoting the idea of a “memory-cleansing” drug that will dissolve the sheath around the amygdala where fearful memories are stored. (74) It is a drastic step and we do not think drugs are needed. Rather, we regard the responses of Charlie M. and others as a result of a simple error in coding. The protective fight-flight response begins to prompt the person to move away from a perceived threat. The symptoms of PTSD (flashbacks, upsetting dreams, emotional numbness, self-destructive behavior etc...) can all be classified as “move away” or “flight” messages. The fact that this particular threat only exists on a flat-screen television makes it difficult for people like Charlie M. to respond.

## **THE RASHOMON EFFECT**

Charlie M’s experience demonstrates that memory, like nostalgia, is not what it used to be—or at least what psychologists thought it was. We have known for a long time that memories can be embellished. Our tendency to superimpose wishful thinking or a more logical storyline on past events weakens the authenticity of what actually happened. As any experienced hypnotist knows, the way questions are structured can alter someone’s memories and influence future beliefs and behaviors.

Despite all the advances in neurosciences it is still widely accepted that the traces etched into the fabric of our long-term memory are more or less stable. Treatment, conventional wisdom contends, is simply a matter of correctly accessing the brain’s archival system in order to establish what “really” happened.

Unfortunately, the accepted theory is not true. Recent research shows that each time you access a memory, you effectively de-stabilize it. And, when you return it to you mental hard-drive, it is somehow changed. This is the basis of the Rashomon Effect, named after the iconic film directed by Akira Kurosawa, in which four eye-witnesses to a crime recall it in entirely contradictory ways. (75)



## ERASING MEMORIES

Researchers Kari Nader and Joseph LeMouéz call this phenomenon “reconsolidation”. To prove their hypothesis, the researchers installed phobias in a group of rats by giving each an electric shock every time they saw their training cage, causing the rats to freeze each time they saw the cage. Even when the rats were injected with a drug that blocks protein synthesis (traditionally protein changes have been associated with laying down memories), the rats continued to freeze. The response seemed fixed and permanent. However, if the scientists reminded the rats of the stimulus just before injecting them; the memory, previously assumed to be permanent simply disappeared. (76) Based on the results, it seems important that the rats recalled the traumatizing incident a moment or two before the drug was administered.

Needless to say, the pharmaceutical industry was delighted at the idea of erasing PTSD, phobias, psychosis and other anxiety-related problems by simply recalling the traumatizing material and popping a pill. Not everyone agrees. Some argue that who we are and what we become is the product of how we learn to respond to life events.

This is not the first attempt to erase memories by linking a memory and deliberately disrupting the subject’s brain function. More than thirty years ago, Canadian psychiatrist Richard Rubin was claiming to be able to produce amnesia among his patients by having them recall traumatic memories just before electroconvulsive shock treatment. One of his patients, a young woman suffering from a compulsion to stab her mother to death, apparently forgot her urge and returned home the next day. Before that, more than twenty shocks administered when the woman was anaesthetized had made no impact on her compulsion. (77)

Happily, Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the techniques of Being Happy offer equally effective and much kinder tools than electroshock treatment to achieve the same and possibly better result. Managing your memory is a core skill of living a positive, conscious and optimistic life. Many people who consult us would like to remember things better. Others remember only too well. They have the ability to recall infinitely tiny details about the traumatizing event. We have known people who can pull a mental tape-measure out in their imagination and measure how far people in the memory were standing apart; such is the vividness of their recollections.

Pause for a moment and consider how the ability to minimize the recall of disturbing events coupled with the increased ability to recall of positive events could affect your life. Each person reading this will be able to find ways of using this skill for personal benefit. In fact, you will be

doing very much what Charlie M. was doing in relation to September 11, 2001 with one modification. You'll just remember to pick good memories.

All we have to do to make this possible is to help you create a machine that allows you to become more selective and gives you freedom from the discomfort you have been suffering without making you less of a person. In many ways, it will make you a better person because the same machine can be used to make your memory work better for the things that matter. To show you how to do that, we've created the following exercise that comprises two parts.

The first part destabilizes a persistent negative memory; the second installs and consolidates a more appropriate response.



### **EXERCISE 13 PART I: THE RED SHOES PATTERN**

This exercise takes its name from the pair of red shoes a client recalled at this point in one of Richard's Personal Enhancement seminars. Read through this exercise first and make sure you understand it. Once you start, you do not want to interrupt the process.

#### 1. Recall a troubling memory

Notice whether the memory is life-size or bigger. Disturbing memories are seldom, if ever, recalled as small, indistinct images. Notice, too, whether it seems as if you are actually in the experience again (that is, as if you are seeing things through your own eyes). Recall any sounds you might have heard.

**Note:** This is a highly adaptable pattern. It can be used where there are a number of negative experiences. A war veteran said he could recall "about 50" traumatic experiences and asked, "Which bad memory should I pick? Do I have to do them all?" The answer is, no. Pick the worst experience, or the one that recurs most frequently.

2. Note the qualities of the feeling in your body relating to this memory.

Give each feeling a number between 1 and 10.

1=comfortable or manageable;

10=extremely disturbing.

3. Ask yourself, "What has this experience caused me to believe about myself, the people around me, and my world?"

Your answer might include, "powerless", "abandoned", "robbed of a life or future".

Write these down and set the list aside for use in Part Two of this process.

4. Now, think of something in your past that was important to you once yet no longer is.

Examples of this could include an item of clothing (red shoes perhaps?) you loved when you were 12 but would not dream of wearing now. Even if that thing made you shiver with pleasure at the time, when you look back at it now, it no longer even seems to have been part of your experience. This now exists in your Zone of Indifference.

5. Notice the differences between the image that no longer attracts you and that of your troubling memory.

This image almost certainly smaller, less distinct, or, in a different location in your internal visual field compared with the first image in this exercise. It may have a border or a defining edge; you may be able to see yourself in the image etc. Think about it and make a mental note or write it down.

6. Return to the unpleasant experience you identified in step one, only this time start at its end, as if it is already over.

In your mind, flatten the image as if it is on a flat screen television. Begin to run it as a movie, but backwards. For example, if you were in a bus that blew up, you'd start with the debris lying on the ground starting to come together, all of a sudden, until the bus is back into one piece. It is

important to do this really fast. This step has nothing to do with truth, meaning or logic. It is about training (even tricking) your nervous system. Run it again, from end to beginning, even faster than before.

**Note:** When you run something in reverse the meaning is reversed. Basically it 'un-events' the experience. Reversing also disrupts the pattern in which your neurons fire along that particular neural pathway. For this reason, it is important that you never interrupt the process from the minute you begin. Secondly, do it faster and faster each time, running it backwards, seeing and hearing everything in reverse. Speed is important. Do it at least ten times faster than real time.

7. Repeat the step 6, but add a soundtrack to your reverse movie.

We recommend circus music. Circus music helps puts stupid ideas into perspective.

8. Now, when your sound-tracked rewind movie hits the beginning, switch to your Zone of Indifference really quickly.

Remember in Step 4 where you identified something you once loved but no longer care about? In your mind, take the image of your unwanted experience and snap it quickly into the location of the experience, event or possession that is no longer important to you (the red shoes). Make sure all the qualities of the unwanted image (the sub-modalities) match those in your Zone of Indifference.

9. Now, test your response to the memory.

How do you feel about this memory now? How does your current feeling compared with the feelings you noted or wrote down in Step 2? If you do not feel any different, repeat the exercise as many times as needed.

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The above exercise is the technique used to help Charlie M. recover from his version of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Like many of the other people who developed fears and phobias after September 11, his mind had been imprinted through the constant repetitions of the film footage showing the airplane crashing into the North Tower and both towers collapsing. Through this exercise, he learned to watch the towers rebuilding themselves, floor by floor, chunks of concrete and other debris flying up back into their rightful place; the clouds of smoke being sucked back into the area, and the planes flying backwards out into the distance and disappearing.



## **EXERCISE 14 PART II: RECONSOLIDATION**

Many researchers believe a victim's feelings of helplessness serve to embed the trauma in his or her nervous system. Perceiving yourself as powerless can be a seriously disabling condition, sometimes making it nearly impossible for you to regard yourself as an effective or worthy person. (78) Certainly, we find that many people make decisions and draw conclusions about themselves and their world based on their negative experiences. These might include feeling of powerlessness, inferiority and abandonment or a belief that you have betrayed or robbed of the life and future you want. (79)

The second part of this exercise serves to resolve these issues. As with part I, read through the steps first and make sure you understand all the steps prior to beginning.

### **PART II**

You should now be able to recall the troubling experience with less emotional heat. It is time to use the list you made back in Step 2 of Part I about the belief or decision you have been holding about yourself.

1. Notice how holding this belief has affected your life.

2. Consider specific ways you and your life would be different if you held a more resourceful belief about yourself.

3. See yourself already holding that belief.

You are more resourceful, quicker to respond, calmer in the face of extreme stress, more likely to avoid suspicious strangers etc.

4. How would you feel in the future with this response in place?

5. Picture yourself standing at the beginning of the original incident. Breathe in and out slowly, ensuring that the out-breath is slightly longer than the in-breath.

As you feel a sense of calm developing, introduce the responses and feeling from the previous steps as if you had them at the time you most needed them and run the traumatic experience with the new beliefs and resources in place. Notice how things would have worked out differently with these beliefs and resources in place. Challenge yourself ... but make sure you triumph.

6. Invite your unconscious mind, now or sometime later, to make you aware of a valuable lesson the experience, however upsetting it has been, can reveal to you.-

We often find that people who extract meaning from even the most negative experiences recover quicker than those who can find no lessons learnt. Allow this to float into your awareness and thus complete the reconsolidation experience.

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Note: You may be able to amplify your resourceful response by running the scenario from Step 5 while you are engaged in some repetitive activity, such as jogging or skipping. Exercise

deliberately stresses the system in order to prompt it to reorganize at a higher, more effective level. There is every reason to believe that you can piggyback emotional health and development on to this reorganization process.



BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, make two lists.

**1: Make a list of your memories that empower you.** These include the successes you had when you were younger, as well as praise for your achievements.

2: Make a list of all the memories that cause you problems.

This is your next project. Create a program whereby you tackle each of these difficult memories using the exercises you learned in this and the preceding chapters. Choose one or two a day. If you wish, keep the more invasive and disruptive ones until you reach the chapter, *Bringing it All Together*, in Part II of this book. You may also wish to layer other techniques on to the ones above to increase effectiveness as you become more proficient.

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## **CHAPTER SEVEN: MEANING, PURPOSE AND PERSEVERANCE**

In this chapter:



- The magical space where everything can change;
  - Why people give up;
  - Spirituality is important to your health;
  - Excellence is a learnable skill.
- 

War brings out the worst in many people. In some, it brings out the best.

### **DR. VICKTOR FRANKL**

On a grey September morning in 1942, Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl was arrested by the Nazis and deported with his family to Theresienstadt, a notorious concentration camp set up by the Germans near Prague. During the following three years, incarcerated in the death camps of Auschwitz, Dachau and Turkheim, Frankl lost his parents, his brother and his wife Tilly. Frankl himself survived, despite nearly succumbing to typhoid fever during the last months of the war.

Right up till the moment of liberation, Frankl never succumbed to despair. He focused on a goal. His mission? To reconstruction of the manuscript he had been working on when it was discovered by his captors and destroyed. He was aware that the likelihood of him surviving, let alone recreating his book and seeing it published was slim. Nevertheless, he made a conscious decision to cling persistently to hope. His determination and diligence paid off. He survived and the manuscript *The Doctor and the Soul*, once published became his most influential work.

*The Doctor and the Soul* was written on scraps of paper with pencil stubs scrounged from other prisoners or rescued when thrown away by his Nazi guards. Logically Frankl had everything going against him; yet he saw the possibilities rather than the encumbrances. With tenacious resolve he completed the book on a patchwork of scraps with cast off lead. Unknown to him at the time the book was destined to become one of a series of publications that would rock the foundations of current theories of human nature.

## **A MISSION UNFULFILLED**

Frankl's observations during his incarceration confirmed a theory he had been toying with since the age of 16, that people who looked for and found a sense of meaning in their lives, those who believed they had a mission yet to be fulfilled and that they were free to choose their responses to whatever happened to them, were best equipped to transcend their circumstances and flourish. Furthermore, they stuck doggedly to these beliefs, no matter how terrible their circumstances might be.

Imagine if a person who hadn't lived what Frankl experienced made a suggestion as radical as this. He or she would have greeted with derision. Frankl was uniquely qualified. His life experience coupled with his skills and training reinforced his findings. Rather than see a situation as desperate and himself as a victim, he chose to use the situation to his advantage and thereby made his work more powerful.

Later, he marveled at how a person could be stripped of all freedoms but one—the ability to choose one's attitude and response to any given set of circumstances. [\(80\)](#) [\(81\)](#)

Frankl was committed to the scientific method, making observations, creating hypotheses, testing these hypotheses, and then re-testing them to see if the results were the same. Both during the war and afterward, Frankl's theories checked out. His theory was sound and it would change the world.

Frankl recalled watching fellow prisoners comforting each other, giving away their last scraps of food to those they perceived as worse off than themselves. Self-sacrifice, compassion, empathy and the unique human ability to care...was Frankl suggesting that denying pain and tragedy was enough to help the victim overcome his situation?

Far from it. As a doctor of psychiatry, Frankl was deeply aware of the impact such unthinkable horrors could have on those who had not found within themselves the physical or emotional stamina to cope. He identified three reactions all prisoners experienced to some degree or other:

- 1) Shock, in the admission phase;
- 2) Apathy, after adjusting to the reality of a life-and-death situation;

3) And, on liberation from the nightmare, a cluster of responses, including what he called depersonalization, bitterness and disillusionment.

### **THE MAGICAL SPACE**

Not everyone who survived was able to readjust. Many spent the rest of their lives suffering from the horrors that, in reality, had come and gone.

Frankl suffered as well. Yet despite his own struggles coping with the loss of and life without his family, he was convinced that meaning can be found in each moment of living, even amidst appalling suffering and loss. He realized that the way out of victimhood was to accept that change was both possible and necessary if life of any quality was to go on.

Frankl credited much of his own survival to identifying this magical space, that is mentally finding and sticking with a purpose and a belief in a compelling future. The choosing of a mission, in his case the reconstruction of his manuscript coupled with his belief that he had not yet completed his life's work, provided him a bulwark against the insanity around him and a pathway out. This reinforced his belief that one of the most important qualities of survival and transformation is an individual's belief in a compelling future. Without that, he stated a prisoner was doomed.

### **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN**

Some years later, Major William E Mayer, a man who would later become the US Army's chief psychiatrist, published a study giving a completely different picture of the impact of incarceration.

Mayer studied 1,000 prisoners of war (POW) who had been imprisoned in a North Korean camp. Intriguingly, the camp he studied was considered one of the 'softer' POW camps. Unlike other detention centers, the prisoners in this camp were not tortured, starved or subject to overt emotional abuse. No armed guards surrounded the camp and the perimeter was entirely devoid of barbed wire.

In this prison many of the captive soldiers allied themselves with their North Korean captors, turning against each other without any discernible rewards. The death rate was 38% (the average is 25%) and represented the highest in US POW history. Half of these died from no particular

cause. They had simply given up. Perhaps the most surprising aspect, given the minimal security and high mortality, is not a single prisoner tried to escape.

The response in this camp so distinctive, Mayer gave the syndrome a medical label: 'mirasmus', meaning a lack of resistance; a passivity. Unlike Frankl's survivors, the POW camp prisoners failed to assign either meaning or mission to their situation. They failed to choose their response.

From the North Koreans' point of view, this was no accident. Their knowledge of the psychology of influence and manipulation were vastly more advanced than that of their American enemies. Using just four simple tools:

- 1) Encouraging prisoners to inform on their comrades;
- 2) Forcing them to criticize themselves;
- 3) Having them deny loyalty to their country of birth;
- 4) Withholding positive emotional support.

The North Korean captors triggered a breakdown in all the processes that otherwise would have helped the prisoners to survive. Tactics the North Korean's used included rewarding informants with candy and cigarettes, while not punishing the person being informed on. Slowly and surreptitiously the captors undermined the soldiers' commitment to their country and their leadership thus causing them to reject all attempts by officers to create stability and discipline. The North Koreans made sure only depressing news and letters were delivered from home. The prisoners were even given unpaid bills that had been forwarded from their residences in the United States. The final shreds of self-worth and integrity were effectively removed by a technique still routinely used by many psychologists and psychiatrists who are allegedly helping their clients. Today we call it group therapy.

The North Koreans held regular sessions in which all participants were encouraged to speak out about their psychological problems and failings. They were pushed to confess everything bad they'd ever done, and all the positive intentions they'd had, but had failed to put into effect. The North Koreans knew something of which many modern counselors and therapists are still unaware: the more people focus on and express their negative thoughts, feelings and opinions, the worse their physical and emotional health becomes. [\(82\)](#)

## **CHOICE—MISSION—BELIEF—MEANING**

These are words that might seem abstract and remote to everyday life, yet in our own experience, as well as in research in fields such as business, sport and health, the happiest and most successful people cultivate and cherish precisely these qualities.

Various studies have shown that meaning and hope can be more accurate predictors of longevity than doing all the 'right things', such as quitting smoking, drinking moderately, taking regular exercise, and eating plenty of vegetables and fruit. (83) The beliefs and expectations you hold about yourself, your situation and the world you're in, can decide whether you succeed or fail at a specific task as well as how you react to therapy or medication whether or not you respond to drugs as powerful as morphine. (84)

### Choice—Mission—Belief—Meaning

Probably the most important quality in the list above is meaning, which is having something or someone you regard as contributing to your life. A clear sense of meaning tends to increase our ability to reach higher and achieve more than we often suspect is possible. This happens on both a conscious and an unconscious level due to the sorting mechanism in the brain known as the *Reticular Activating System* (RAS).

## **RETICULAR ACTIVATING SYSTEM**

Most of us are familiar with the experience of deciding to buy a new car. Amusing isn't it that once you decided upon a model, suddenly you seem to see that model everywhere you go? As another example, consider how after hearing a new word or song for the first time, you start hearing it again and again. This is your Reticular Activating System at work. It can work for you or against you depending how you prime it.

Unfortunately, many people are more accustomed to negatively rather than positively priming the RAS. Perhaps you are one. Examples of this can be repeatedly telling yourself (or a group therapy session) about your bad childhood, or what a failure you are. Using past issues such as lack of education, drug addiction or incarceration to create excuses may generate temporary sympathy or attention, but, long-term focusing on past problems is likely to keep you lodged in

pain, or even create the very outcome you hate and fear. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, arresting progress and shackling you to the prison existing solely in your mind. Your fears are the guards; your negativity the barbed wire. The good news is by choosing a mission of Being Happy, you *can* walk out of that prison today.

Choice—Mission—Belief—Meaning

It has already been clearly demonstrated that the attitude and actions of health professionals have the power to influence that progression and outcome of a patient's illness, in ways that have little or nothing to do with the physical treatment used. (85) What we have learned from these practitioners and from our own relationships, especially from our clients, fully supports the premise of this book. Rather than chasing after happiness in the form of the right person, a better job or a new car, you can identify how to feel good, decide where and when you want this to happen in your life. You can exercise your power to choose your responses to any situation you may encounter. Being Happy is just such a process.

Choice—Mission—Belief—Meaning

Fortunately, we don't have to become a prisoner of war in order to learn about Being Happy. Functioning in a state of daily well-being is both art and science. Despite mounting evidence that improving well-being is easier and more cost-effective than trying to fix people when they go wrong, it's still highly unlikely that anyone in Western mainstream psychology or healthcare is ready to acknowledge the fact, much less devote important tax dollars to improving it. The initial profit motive just isn't there. But that's in the West. It's an entirely different story in Japan.

## **IKIGAI**

Ikigai (*pronounced* 'eek-e-j-aye') is a Japanese word without an English equivalent. It is often translated as 'subjective well-being'. In practice it refers to a number of qualities, including purpose, meaning, and a joyful or welcoming attitude to life. High ikigai is associated with health and longevity; low ikigai with disease and reduced life expectancy.

A seminal study conducted in 1994 and recently published surveyed tens of thousands of Japanese between the ages of 40 and 79. Hidden in a large number of questions was one that simply asked, "Do you have ikigai in your life?" (86)

The respondents were followed up over the next seven years, during which a number of the respondents died. When the researchers took into consideration various accepted risk factors, including age, gender, body-weight, smoking, alcohol consumption, diet, stress levels and history of disease, known in research as confounds, ikigai turned out to be a highly accurate predictor of who would still be alive at the end of the study. Simply put nearly 95% of those who reported having a sense of meaning in their lives were still alive after seven years, compared with 83% of those who reported no meaning in their lives.

#### Choice—Mission—Belief—Meaning

The study supports what we in NLP have been saying for nearly 40 years. Despite initial skepticism at some of the claims made (such as people's internal maps influence not only how they perceive and respond to the world but actually affect their physical and emotional health), some studies in the West are beginning to support the NLP approach. Recent studies have suggested that optimism, (87) passion (88) and a positive self-image (89) all predispose the subject towards better health and well-being.

Unfortunately, all the Western researchers and all their studies seem to presuppose that choice, meaning and mission are inborn characteristics, rather like being born with blue eyes or a swimmer's build. This falls into the realm of what we discussed in earlier chapters about not questioning the perceived or collective wisdom. Having established the qualities that lead to health, well-being and longevity, we are left with the question: what now?

Neuro-Linguistic Programming has consistently claimed excellence is a learnable skill. Some people still regard this idea with skepticism and therefore refuse to consider it. However, since each subjective experience has a discernible structure, most experiences can be modeled, learned and passed on to other people. Hundreds of thousands and quite possibly millions of people around the world have chosen to try out the principles and techniques of NLP for themselves. They will argue that not only can we help ourselves and others to progress in almost any field, but we also have the technology for self-evolution.

A sense of meaning we now know is inextricably bound up in beliefs. The beliefs a sufferer of angina or congenital heart failure or cancer holds regarding his or her illness may help decide the outcome of the condition. Concurrently, a physician's belief in the efficacy of a treatment is an important determinant in its success or failure. (90)

## THE MEANING OF LIFE

We are sometimes asked, 'What is the meaning of life?'

Inevitably with this question the subject of religion comes up. Some of the people asking this question are seeking validation, hoping that we will reinforce their belief that their religion is the 'right' one—which of course we don't and won't. Faith and belief are not the same thing. Spirituality and believing in something bigger than ourselves undoubtedly has a major impact on our health and well-being, but this question isn't about faith. It's about the application of life. Simply put, the meaning of life *is the meaning you ascribe to it*. What you believe is what you'll see, hear and feel; therefore it makes sense to pay special attention to the beliefs you hold.

We (the authors) try to cultivate a sense of awe in both our clients and ourselves. This isn't difficult to do. After all, if we weren't part of something much bigger than our physical and mental selves, how can all our billions of individual neurons work together to produce coherent thoughts, a sense of history and create the experience we each call self? The human organism is a miraculous thing. Your heart beats two billion times in a lifetime; your fingerprints are unique, while the neuro-cortical pathways and potential connections of each human being exceeds the number of atoms in the known universe. Yet despite your uniqueness, the thing you have in common with everyone else on the planet is the amazingly beautiful and complex machine that holds it all together: your body, driven by your brain.

It's easy to believe it is all the product of something bigger, because, of course, it is. You can call it genetics or call it God. Whichever defines your position, these are powers greater than us as individuals. Believing in something grander than yourself and that something extends from before you were born to long after you die, believing that a consciousness that's strong enough will probably survive death, is important in many ways. Large-scale studies show that people who have strong spiritual beliefs of any kind and follow the practices of those beliefs, are one third more likely to survive serious illness. [\(91\)](#)

There are things in the world that cannot be explained and probably never will be. For example, we talk about gravity, but still have no idea how it works. We don't know why an element is an element. We only know that it is, that it melts at a certain temperature and if we combine certain elements in certain ways we can make water. We know that if we compress hydrogen enough, we get a sun. As to what makes it that way, we simply have no idea.



Quite simply, when you hold beliefs that are so big, the little things you have to do or put up with in life don't seem so overwhelmingly large. That's meaning. That's life and life is good!



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, take some time to review everything that gives meaning to your life. Write these down. For example, if you answer “my children”, ask yourself:

“What about my children provides meaning to my life?”

“What’s even bigger than having children I love?”

Keep refining your answers until you have the sense that you can go no further. Then, ask yourself: ‘What is my purpose in life? What is my mission while am I on this planet?’

Don't worry if you an answer to the last questioning isn't immediately forthcoming. In the next chapter we will elicit and refine your unconscious mission and help direct you even further along the path of Being Happy.

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT: YOUR ESSENTIAL NEEDS**

Six Keys to Surviving and Flourishing

In this chapter:

- People need people;
- The need for control;
- Optimism equals living longer;
- What “rebalancing” really means.

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Human beings, like all other living things, have certain needs: food, water, rest, someone with whom to reproduce. These are all obvious matters of survival and the failure to satisfy any of them can have fatal consequences to the individual or the species.

What is not as obvious, though just as important, is a group of needs that are vital to our species' ability to survive and flourish. Modern Western medicine and psychiatry still fail to recognize that human beings are not simple machines that require little more than occasional repair (therapy), different fuel (medication) or new parts (surgery). We are far more complex than that. Each part of our bodies is connected to every other part, including the brain, through a complex collection of feed-back loops. Any imbalance in any part can affect other parts and, eventually, the integrity and smooth functioning of the whole.

People we regard as Being Happy inevitably excel at getting their needs met in appropriate and consistent ways, in this way, optimizing the integrity and smooth functioning of their bodies and minds. Those who are not as successful often suffer from a wide range of complex, chronic emotional and physical conditions that can leave orthodox science baffled and helpless. Considerable evidence now exists that people flourish when six major needs are met. These are:

### **SIX ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF HUMAN BEINGS**

1. Social support and connectedness;
2. A sense of control;
3. Optimism;

4. Belief in the predictability of life;
5. The ability to recover or rebalance after stressful engagement (dissipating entropy);
6. Purpose and meaning, including a sense of spirituality and being part of something bigger than the individual self. [\(92\)](#)

The converse is also true. An individual's health and longevity may be adversely affected should these fundamental needs remain unmet.

These six attributes are known as 'psychological modulators'; they fit together to function as a whole, or to use an analogy, a wheel made up of six segments. As long as each segment is fully inflated, the wheel can rotate smoothly and the system as a whole functions efficiently. However, if one or more segment is deflated (that is, the relevant need is not being met), much of the system's energy is deflected towards trying to compensate for the deficit, in much the same way as a flat tire will drag a vehicle off-course.

This is what happens when you fail to fix a serious problem. If you don't take action, the causes of the situation may stay the same, but, as energy continues to be drawn away from the rest of your life, the impact gets worse.

This chapter discusses processes and actions rather than setting goals or achieving specific states. In a later chapter, we'll invite you to measure your present status via simple scales. Remember: people respond differently to challenges. Your subjective response will be important. Then, when you have a clear idea of the areas of your life you'd like to improve, the rest of the book will introduce you to a series of exercises designed strengthen the areas you want to tackle.

## **THE SIX ESSENTIAL NEEDS**

### **1. Social support and connectedness**

We have all heard stories about someone surviving only a short time after the death of a much-loved spouse. This phenomenon is a staple of passionate literature from Shakespeare to some of the tear-jerker movies of today. Thirty years ago, Colin Murray Parkes published a comprehensive study demonstrating the occurrence was more than a literary device. He showed

that many people, unable to make the transition to being without their beloved, fall victim to a range of illnesses with alarming frequency.

People often attributed this to the consequences of a “broken heart”, a diagnosis most medical experts dismissed (and some still dismiss) out of hand. However, science is increasingly revealing the condition is real enough, the result of profound emotional imbalance leading to malfunctioning body chemistry. Unless you have a natural or cultivated resilience to intense grief coupled with loneliness, your body goes into shock closely resembling that suffered by victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. How you respond can literally mean the difference between life and death. [\(93\)](#)

Some heart specialists now rate the impact of broken relationships and the ensuing loneliness as potentially as dangerous as clogged arteries and extreme stress. The largest study reflecting this was conducted by The Mayo Clinic’s Dr Chet Rihal. In it, he examines what he calls “broken heart syndrome”, and confirms a strong link between emotional loss and cardiac problems. Among other findings, the study also notes roughly 10% of people who survive a heart attack after the loss of a loved one are likely to have another attack within a short period of time. [\(94\)](#) Yet, despite the number of people who fall victim to loss and loneliness, the majority of individuals appear to cope without serious problems. Genetics and general heart health undoubtedly are factors in their return to balance, but a social connectedness that stretches beyond reliance on a single person is another significant factor.

More than 60-years ago in the little town of Roseto, Pennsylvania, found itself the center of scientific attention. “We couldn’t understand how the people of Roseto had such a low rate of myocardial infarction,” one of the researchers recalls. “We expected to find these super-fit people who ate sparsely and took lots of exercise. But that was not the case ...”

The residents of Roseto were hardly models of health and fitness. They ate fatty food, drank alcohol and lounged around whenever possible. In fact their lifestyle was identical to that of their neighbors in nearby towns and cities. The sole difference the scientists could find was that Rosetans were strongly bonded. They were friendly barn-raisers. Everyone knew each other; they volunteered help whenever it was needed, and they reported a powerful sense of belonging and identity within the community. If this was what protected the Rosetans, scientists theorized, then the rate of heart disease would rise as the younger townspeople moved to other towns and cities.

The scientists began a 50-year longitudinal study which ultimately proved their theory. As the townspeople became more “Americanized” and the children struck out on their own, the effect faded. A strong sense of social connectedness had inoculated the residents against heart disease at least as effectively as eating the right food, taking regular exercise, not smoking and drinking, and generally living what is commonly agreed to be a healthy lifestyle. (95) This effect has since been demonstrated in a number of studies. “Host resistance” to disease, as it is known, is clearly and profoundly enhanced by social support and connectedness. (96)

## **2. A sense of control**

Soldiers under fire are more likely to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder if they feel they lack control and support from their comrades. (97) This phenomenon is no less common, and no less dangerous, to people in everyday life and work situations who feel as if they are spiraling out of control. According to the World Health Organization, work-related stress becomes potentially dangerous when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes. (98) The same toxic effect has been found in personal relationships in which people feel they have little or no say in day-to-day activities and outcomes.

A sense of lack of control over a situation can mean more than mere discomfort to the victim. In 1995, a major longitudinal study found that people who felt they had little or no control in their home or working lives were 30% more likely to die prematurely than those who felt they were in charge of their work and personal relationships. (99) The combination of high stress with low control is particularly lethal. Multiple studies show massive and rapid deterioration in the health and well-being of both animals and people under these conditions.

Fortunately, the opposite is also true. As control is restored and more choices become available the effect of even major life-challenges can be offset. (100) The subjective experience of pain and need for medication decreases, (101) and the subject may even live significantly longer than people who feel less in control. (102)

## **3. Optimism**

Optimistic people do better in almost all areas of life than their pessimistic counterparts. This is not about advocating false hope or denial. Rather it's about encouraging people to develop the

expectation that things will get better. In truth, it almost always does. Life is dynamic and change is its sole permanent feature. Therefore, the chance of any circumstances improving is always present.

Does that mean that all problems will be fixed in some cosmic machine shop? Not necessarily. What is important is expectation, *the belief* that the situation however bad, can improve in some way or other. This is a mark of someone adept at Being Happy.

## **THE GLASS IS HALF FULL**

Robert Sapolsky in his book on stress and coping, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, (103) notes a study in which parents whose children diagnosed with cancer were only moderately distressed upon learning the disease carried a 25% risk of death. The reason, he concluded, was that the 75% survival odds were perceived as miraculously high. As Sapolsky observed, the meaning people attach to events can literally make the difference between life and death. (104) (105) It's not so much the reality of a situation that triggers the response, but whether it is interpreted as either 'positive' or 'negative'.

This is the reason we encourage doctors to frame the information they give to their patients in ways that predispose them towards an optimistic outcome. It is not only kinder to tell a patient that there is a 40% chance of beating a particular disease than a 60% chance of dying from it, but, presenting the information in this way may just save his or her life.

(This reminds us of the story of the patient who was told by his doctor that there was a 5% chance that he would survive the extremely serious disease with which had been diagnosed. The man—an optimist after our own hearts—leapt to his feet excitedly and exclaimed, "I'll take it!")

## **4. Predictability**

Once people are able to predict certain events with reasonable accuracy, their response to painful and stressful situations improves. Vulnerable populations in London during the Blitz not only adapted to the constant threat of regular German air raids, but became considerably more resilient to stress diseases than their fellow countrymen living in areas where raids were more erratic.

However, both too much and too little predictability can have their downside.

People sometimes kill themselves rather than face a major life-change, such as a divorce. This supports Virginia Satir's opinion that keeping things the same is a stronger human compulsion than even the drive to stay alive. (106) Yet, human beings also crave excitement and novelty. People employed in highly repetitive and predictable jobs often suffer from high levels of job dissatisfaction, absenteeism and high blood pressure. The effects of mundanity are reversible. By simply introducing variety, interspersing boring assembly-line activities with less predictable activities, health and well-being can be restored. (107)

Once again, subjective perception and response is the key. Some people favor a more predictable existence, while others jump out of planes or off bridges tied to bungee cords. It should be noted that even where people indulge in extreme sports, they do so voluntarily. They know when and where it is going to happen—itsself a form of predictability. The fact is we all need a measure of predictability and novelty within our lives. Creating the proper balance underlies Being Happy.

## 5. Dissipating entropy

People take in and use energy from many different sources: food, information, the ups and downs of daily experience, major problems and challenges, etc. Scientists are beginning to understand that a failure to dissipate unused energy or its chemical by-products can have a negative effect on an individual's health and well-being. This potentially toxic build-up we call 'entropy', a word and a process borrowed from the field of thermodynamics.

Dissipating entropy is essential to finding the sweet spot between being healthy or sick. Information and challenges bombard you at a phenomenal rate. The speed at which you're expected to cope is increasing. If you fail to dissipate the waste-products of this frenzied energy, you will fail to rebalance and reorient yourself. The result of this failure may include diseases such as asthma, allergies, Type II diabetes, migraines, Cancer and heart disease. Up to a half of people seeking help from their physicians are suffering from physical and emotional conditions that have no identifiable or pathological cause. While we're not saying stress is the sole cause of these problems, it's safe to say that all of them are made worse by an overload of the nervous system. Learning how to effectively handle and dissipate entropy is another key to Being Happy. This is what 'rebalancing' really means. (108) (109) (110)



## 6. Purpose and Meaning

This is a massive subject that deserves a chapter on its own. Prior to reading on, review the five categories already discussed and get a feeling for your strengths and deficits in each category. You will have an opportunity in Part Two to deal with each need in turn.

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# CHAPTER NINE: COMMITMENT, CONFIDENCE AND COMPULSION

In this chapter:

- What elite performers do differently;
  - To do or to be?
  - Decisions and follow-through;
  - Fun with fetishes.
- 

Successful people in all walks of life are not only confident they can live life to the fullest, but they're committed to doing what needs to be done in order to get where they want to be. Some, the elite making up the top four percent of a given population, are compelled to keep moving forward.

Committing to new challenges occurs easily when you:

- Have a clear direction. As we'll explain later, this is not quite the same thing as setting goals;
- Know what needs to be done and do it consistently, even compulsively, no matter what happens,
- Find ways to feel good, not just when you achieve what you set out to accomplish, but at frequent points along the way.

Surprisingly, many people who should know better never bother to actually plan to be successful. They worry at great length about their problems, or, more often, about their *imagined* problems, then wonder why their fantasies about having health, wealth and happiness don't quite match their experience.

American basketball legend Bobby Knight often said that, while the will to succeed was important, the will to *prepare* to succeed was even more so. (111)

Knight's insight suggests that planning and preparation involve more than the over-simple pencil and paper planning beloved of some business and self-development seminars. Most people know how to set goals; few plan to have the appropriate mind-set and commitment to see those goals through to completion. Attitude, energy and follow-through are the keys to success.

When most people talk about having vision, they're speaking metaphorically about plans and objectives. In NLP, we mean it literally. If you don't take the trouble to see clearly in your mind's eye what you want, you won't do what's necessary for ongoing fulfillment. This is the problem with most planning methods that teach people to visualize success as if it's already a reality. Visualizations need to be planned carefully in the knowledge that your unconscious mind is extremely literal. Your internal representation needs to be vivid, compelling and in the form of a movie or video-clip, rather than a snapshot. You also need to make sure you've checked that everything vital to the successful accomplishment of your plans is present.

We'll outline the entire process for successful mental rehearsal and visualization in greater detail in a later chapter. At this stage, you simply need to decide whether you're visualizing your plans from an associated point of view (that is, seeing through your own eyes, as if everything, such as being a non-smoker, is already accomplished; no further action needed), or, dissociated (that is, seeing yourself in the image, say, following a healthy eating and exercise plan, thus giving your brain a representation of something you'll continue doing). And, extremely importantly, the details are crucial to your success.

A highly successful businessman who attended one of our seminars seemed unable to translate his career success into his family life. He said, "I know exactly what my success picture's like. I can see my family living in a big mansion; we've got a Rolls Royce, a Bentley, a big swimming pool, a tennis court and a big boat."

When asked if his wife and children were in the picture, he said, "Yes". When asked if *he* was in the picture, he sat back surprised with a blank look on his face. "Well, no. It's just my family."

The next question shook him.

"So, did you die and your family's living off the insurance money? How else did they get all this stuff and you're not around?"

By forgetting to include himself in the picture and making it a static image, everyone and everything in it was frozen in time. Predictably, he was unable to move forward with his plans.

Experience shows us that if you fail to include the details, such as leaving the office, driving home, Being Happy with your wife and children, then you are going to have problems achieving any of it. Effective planning might kick in when you get back to the office, but if you are not systematic in all your planning, other important things may never happen. It's not that there was anything wrong with what the man we have been talking about wanted. It is simply that his vision was incomplete. If your plans are incomplete, it's difficult for you to carry out the steps required rapidly, effectively and frequently enough to give the brain a pattern it can hang on to.

This last point is especially important. One of the ways people learn new things is by repeating certain steps in the same order a sufficient number of times. Repetition, either in the imagined process, or in reality, builds strong neural pathways. As neuroscientists are fond of saying, "Neurons that fire together wire together."

Deciding to be cheerful (or whatever), then carrying out the protocols only intermittently is an exercise in futility. If you really want to learn the art of Being Happy, you need to have the details in place, and then follow through regularly and decisively.

The third requirement, making yourself feel better and better at each step, is biologically hardwired. This instinct ensures that we move towards behaviors that support the good of the individual and of the group. Sex is an obvious example.

Imagine the problems we'd have as a species if we enjoyed thinking about sex more than we enjoyed actually doing it. If that were the case, would anybody end up actually having sex? And if it didn't feel better the closer you got to the end, people would stop and do something else. They'd have a little sex, and then break off to go and have a sandwich.

Happily for the human race, the biological imperative is to make the experience more intense as it approaches its intended outcome. That way the participants are happy, and children continue to be born.

## **DESTRUCTIVE MOTIVATION**

One of the most corrosive ways people motivate themselves is with stress and fear.

You see this pattern everywhere, most notably in our schools and colleges. Maybe a student has a project or a term paper to complete with a deadline three months away. His response? Put it off. There's no big hurry and the student may rationalize it by thinking, "Well, I've still got two months. Plenty of time left."

Of course, time seems to slip away, and, once lost, can never be regained. Two months become one month, and then ten days then...PANIC!

"Aargh! Six days to go and I don't even have a subject yet ..."

The strategy of procrastination generally begins with a big, attractive picture of an outcome that makes the person feel really good when contemplating what it will be like when the job is done. Then, he starts to make a series of little snapshot pictures, rather than movies, about all the things that need to be done in order to accomplish the task. The more that happens, the smaller and less distinct the target picture becomes and the good feelings subside. Then, another big picture enters his mind such as going to the movies or hanging out with friends. This distracts him further from his task. The end picture becomes even more fragmented, distanced and blurred.

In order to harness our feelings in ways that support what we want to accomplish, we need to make sure our goals are rich in sensory detail. We need to know what we'll be seeing, hearing, and feeling; but, we also need to plan for more than success. We need to plan to have fun along the way.

Remember: big pictures tend to intensify feelings. Therefore the pictures you make in your mind about achieving your goal must get bigger the closer you get to them. This way, the first step feels good, the next step feels a little bit better, and the next step feels better still, and so on. Each step leads to something a little more intense than the step before



## EXERCISE 15: PLANNING TO SUCCEED

1. Decide on an outcome you would like to have.

Keep it fairly simple at this stage.

2. Now, make a large picture of you and those people in your life who are important to you enjoying this outcome.

3. Move the picture back; make it really big, and then start adding details to smaller pictures between you and your outcome.

If you try to put everything in the same picture, especially a still picture, it's likely to become cluttered. Therefore, move the picture back, make it really big, and then start adding details to smaller pictures between you and your outcome. These should contain specific information about the actions needed to move in your desired direction. These should preferably be moving pictures; and you should be clear at each point how you would like that experience to feel.

4. When the entire sequence is in place, step into the beginning and run the scenario, seeing, hearing and feeling everything you'd experience if it was actually happening now.

Notice how it feels to be there, moving towards your objective. Make sure that each transitional picture gets bigger, brighter and more detailed the closer you come to it.

5. Repeat the exercise several times a day.

Most importantly, make this the last thing you do at night.

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Planning to succeed is a core skill. But is it always enough?

What would happen if you found yourself absolutely driven to achieve or complete something that would bring an enormous amount of positivity into your life? How much better would your life be if

you could turn an appropriate desire into a compulsion or fetish so you absolutely *had* to do it? You already do this with some things. Think about some of your unique compulsions, the things that you simply cannot *not* do. The trick to turning a simple objective into a fetish is to consciously line it up with one of those obsessions your mind already knows how to do. The following exercise shows you exactly how to do that.



### **EXERCISE 16: THE FUN WITH FETISHES PATTERN**

1. Think of something you enjoy doing.

You may not be compelled to do it, but whenever you do, you feel great. Make a list of the sub-modalities of the experience, noticing the [kinesthetics](#) (feelings) prompting you to take action. Anchor this feeling by pressing together *the thumb and forefinger* of one hand.

2. Think of something you feel utterly compelled to do.

Maybe if there's a piece of chocolate cake in front of you, you absolutely must have it. Make a list of the sub-modalities. Notice the kinesthetic that lets you know you are going to take a bite and nobody's going to stop you. Can you feel the saliva beginning to pool in your mouth, the delicious tightening of the upper part of your throat? Anchor this by pressing together the *thumb and second finger* of the same hand.

3. Now think of something you do that gives you huge pleasure when you do it.

You're drawn inexorably to it and the anticipation is almost as delightful as the act itself. When you've fulfilled it, you'll have a period of respite. Then, even without intending to, you'll find yourself pushed and shoved to do it again. This is a fetish (Don't worry. We're not going to ask



you what it is). List the sub-modalities, especially the point-of-no-return kinesthetic. Anchor that by pressing together *the thumb and ring (third) finger* of the same hand.

4. Move your position a bit to 'break state'.

Now relax and think of your commitment to develop your skills at Being Happy. Even though you don't know all the steps as of yet, think of how you want to behave; how you and others will perceive you; how you'll be talking to yourself and others, and what you'll be feeling. Fire your three anchors in quick succession by pressing your thumb on your first, second and third fingers.

5. Hold your third anchor and step into the image in the previous step, bringing all the sub-modalities into line with those you identified when analyzing your fetish.

Amplify the feelings, spinning them faster and faster so they permeate every muscle, organ, system and cell of your body. Do this regularly to maintain and increase the strength of your anchors. Above all, remember *you need to plan, to commit, to take action*. Then take action. Without action there's no possibility of success.

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BEFORE MOVING ON TO SECTION TWO AND THE NEXT CHAPTER, make a list of all the things you'd like to accomplish. Rate them on a scale from zero to ten; zero being no compulsion at all and ten being the feeling of absolute necessity. If you score anything less than eight, you need to spend some time intensifying your motivation for the things you want to do.

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## **PART TWO**

How to become ...

THE PERSON YOU CAN BE

# **CHAPTER TEN: MEETING YOUR NEEDS**

In this chapter:

- Upgrading your relationships;
- Fixing the fear of meeting new people;
- Developing a mind of your own;
- Programming in an optimistic outlook.

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This chapter and the next are the longest and most detailed of the entire book. Each requires your focused and complete attention. Commit to this and you'll receive substantial returns.

In order not to be overwhelmed, we suggest working your way through the exercises at a measured pace. We recommend you engage in no more than two exercises a week. Meeting your needs is a way of caring for yourself, so don't rush it. You can score yourself at whatever stage you feel that you have invested fully in the process. Remember, these are not Band Aids® designed to fix some simple, immediate problem. Rather, you're building ongoing skills that will benefit you for the rest of your life.



## **EXERCISE 17 - MEETING NEED 1: SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS**

Mark your present status for social connectedness on a scale of 0 to 5: 0–1–2–3–4–5

As we've shown elsewhere, a sense of social connectedness is critically important to our physical and mental wellbeing. Quite simply, human beings, like many animals, are social beings. We need to connect, to hear and be heard, to touch and be touched. Even if you choose to get away from it all and find a little patch of land growing your own food, you end up talking to the vegetables. People must communicate.

In situations where you don't have friends or companions, you're likely end up talking to yourself, usually in your head, but sometimes aloud. When you're particularly isolated, you create imaginary friends. If you're not a member of a real society, you're compelled to invent one. This is just the kind of animals we are.

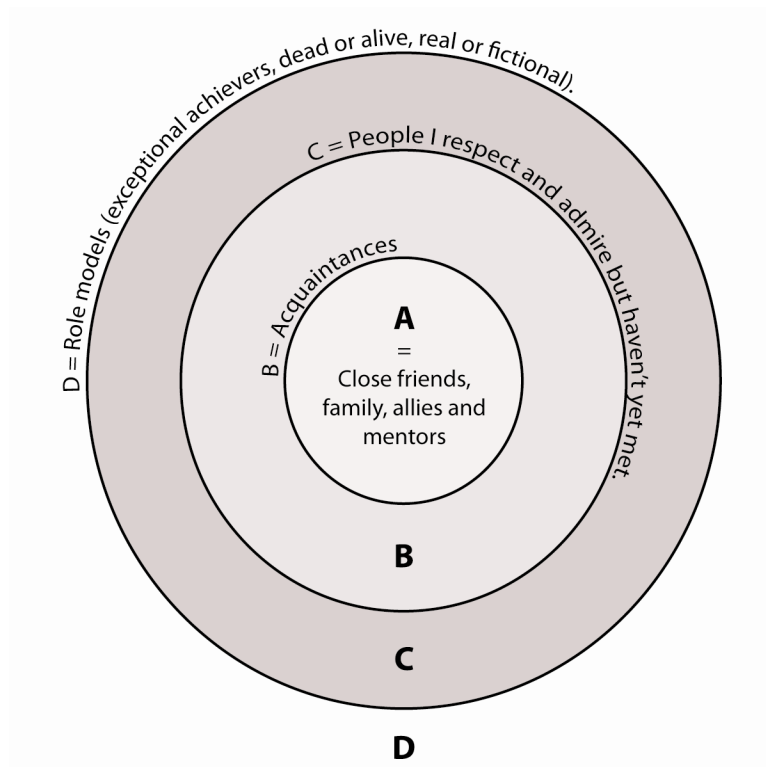
Since the drive to belong is so compelling, and important to our health, it's mystifying why so many people leave their relationships entirely to chance. They form friendships almost randomly. Maintaining those friendships is seldom a matter of conscious action. They meet, marry or form partnerships, maybe have children and take it all for granted. Years later, they complain they have no people they can rely on, or that the spark has gone out of their relationships. Some will lament that their children do not listen to them, or worse, don't even seem to care.

Adepts of Being Happy don't 'do' relationships. Instead, they relate by regarding relations with family, friends, associates and acquaintances as ongoing, interactive, living processes requiring care and attention in order to flourish. In short they nurture each relationship. Even newcomers are welcomed with the possibility that they may transmute from stranger to associate, or even from ally to friend.

The following exercise is an invitation to create a map of your social connections, and develop a game plan for upgrading the roles of those people with whom you can form a mutually supportive and rewarding alliance. After that, you can explore techniques that allow you to wipe out

problems such as social phobia, and to repair or improve relationships currently facing challenges.

## STRENGTHENING YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS Part I



Draw the above figure on a large sheet of paper. Review all your present social connections and fill in their names in the respective zones according to the position they currently occupy in your life.

A = Close friends, family, allies and mentors (people I can rely on).

B = Acquaintances (people I know and like, but see only occasionally).

C = People I respect and admire but haven't yet met.

D = Role models (exceptional achievers, dead or alive, real or fictional).

---

## **STRENGTHENING YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS Part II**

Now that you've identified your relationships, on a second sheet of paper, draw the same circle diagram. This time, reorder all your social connections by moving those people with whom you would *like* closer relations nearer to the center of the circles. Some people in Zone A or B may be close to you, but may exert a negative influence. If this is the case, move these people away from the center into the appropriate circle representing the following attributes:

A = People who actively support me in all aspects of my life.

B = Acquaintances with whom I would like a deeper relationship.

C = People I respect and admire and am prepared to take action in order to get to know better.

D = Role models (exceptional achievers, dead or alive, real or fictional).

## **STRENGTHENING YOUR SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS Part III**

On a third piece of paper, create a series of wide columns headed A, B, C, and D (turn your paper horizontally, if necessary). Under each heading, list all the names from the second figure and alongside each, write down three practical, actionable steps you can take in order to achieve the shift from their present placement to a new, more central position.

For example, you might decide to reinforce your bonds with a friend or family member by volunteering to babysit or run errands, or simply giving an unexpected gift; you could invite a work colleague to lunch, or ask someone you admire to mentor you. Don't be afraid to ask important figures or role models for advice or inspiration; they can only decline ... although a surprising number of people are flattered by the request. If the role model is fictional or dead, become even more familiar with his or her life and philosophy. Read autobiographies, profiles, magazine articles, trawl the Internet to deepen your understanding. Do whatever you can to establish a strong "relationship" with those you admire.

Note down the target positions of each, be specific in your plans, and ensure that the steps are within your control. Revise and rewrite until you have a clear idea of how to proceed.

Set a date for starting each mini project, and commit to starting each then, and to following through. Keep notes of the progress you make.

Note: To avoid overwhelming yourself, schedule your approaches over manageable timeframes.

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## **IMPROVING PRESENT RELATIONSHIPS**

Sadly, many people fail to value and nurture the relationships they already have. They don't realize that relating well requires active maintenance. Very few relationships flourish to the best of their potential without special care.

For some people, it is easy to fall in love. They do it all the time, and often with the wrong person.

For everyone, it is easy to fall out of love especially if you do the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Think about this for a moment. Have you ever met somebody, fallen for them in an explosion of sensual neurochemistry, then eighteen months or two years along the line, you hit a major roadblock? You've woken up one morning and asked yourself in bewilderment, "Who is this person?"

The falling in love part was easy. Several different neurochemical processes and external stimuli occur at precisely the right intensity in exactly the right sequence ...and *Boing!* You're hooked.

Just why certain components of the falling in love experience come together for one person rather than another probably has a lot to do with your childhood conditioning. According to Mark B. Kristal, professor of psychology in the University at Buffalo College of Arts and Sciences, the way people look, sound and feel is all-important. So is how they smell—not just that they smell of strawberries or vanilla rather than mildew or old socks, but that they give off the right kind of minute olfactory particles called pheromones that carry many different messages, including sex, alarm aggression, fear territoriality ...and love. [\(112\)](#)

When the pheromones lock into their receptors, a series of feel-good neuropeptides, including vasopressin and oxytocin as well as the neurotransmitter, dopamine, flood the system to reinforce bonding and reward you for the act of coming together with a potential mate.

Of course, the neurochemistry of falling—and staying—in love is just part of the story. Maintaining a relationship is a conscious and systematic process. Anybody who tells you the excitement of a new relationship has to fade simply hasn't learned how to run their own brain—not to mention the rest of their body.

When you initially fall in love, you spend an enormous amount of time reviewing the good qualities of your beloved, even when you're apart. They are the last thing you think about when you go to sleep (which means you also dream about them), and the first thing that comes to mind when you awake. You fantasize being with them. You may wrap your arms around your own body to simulate their embrace. You imagine laughing at the same things, breathing in synchrony, feeling as if you've known each other forever. Negative points? Well, of course they have them, but these are just background; they just do not matter as much.

In other words, you are fully associated into the aspects you like about your beloved, and dissociated from what you do not.

As time passes (some researchers believe it takes about eighteen months to two years for the nervous system to accustom itself to the neurochemical 'hit' of falling passionately in love), things can begin to change. You start to notice the things that just didn't bother you at the beginning of the relationship. The more you watch, the more you notice: the clothes scattered around on every flat surface; the constantly open toilet seat; the grating quality of their voice; the way they always seem to find something to complain about. How come you never noticed all that before?

You are now associating into the negative aspects of this person, and dissociating from all the positive qualities that attracted you in the first place.

Congratulations! You have just fallen out of love.

This process, which occurs in ailing friendships and business relationships, as well as in love matches, is so powerful that we are able to help people get over abusive or unrequited relationships in a matter of an hour or less by simply shifting these sub-modalities. It works at a structural, rather than a conscious, logical level. What this means is that if you have a relationship

you do not want to lose, take great care not to let this process happen accidentally. The exercise below will enable you to mitigate this process and establish the proper mindset to keep your relationship(s) in good repair.

Take a moment and consider the energy you have been wasting in allowing a key relationship to founder. This could be a love relationship, business, family or friendship. Perhaps you have been arguing more than you used to. Perhaps you feel guilty for not responding the way you know would be best for you both. Ask yourself what you could be doing to put a smile on the other person's face. Do you remember what that used to be? When you first decided to hook up with this person, did you intend to make him or her hate you? Probably not. Remember now how pleasant your time used to be with this person. Would you rather be doing the activities that made you feel good to be with this person, or would you rather be fighting?



### **EXERCISE 18: REPAIRING OR IMPROVING A RELATIONSHIP**

1. Choose a relationship you'd like to improve or repair.
2. Choose three incidents or behaviors that represent qualities that threaten the bond.

The mental pictures and the feelings associated with these memories will be vivid. You're most likely to be replaying these scenarios from an associated point of view (as if you're actually there as they happen).

3. Now choose three desirable qualities or behaviors that you know the relationship has, or once had, but which have been pushed into the background.

The mental pictures of these memories are likely to be dissociated (i.e. smaller, less distinct, framed, as if on a television screen, lacking in color and movement). Feelings will be vague.



4. Close your eyes and picture each negative experience.

Begin working your way through the three negative experiences. Picture each of the experiences in turn, pushing them slowly away into the distance, seeing yourself appear in the image (dissociating from the unwanted experience). As you move the picture further away, allow the color and movement to drain away until it's just a vague dot or blur in the distance. Repeat this five times for each scenario. Do it as rapidly as possible.

5. Next, think about the three positive memories and scenarios you would like to restore to the relationship ([Step 3](#)).

Close your eyes again. In your mind's eye, bring the picture of each event rapidly up towards you, increasing color, size, vitality as you do so. Do this as fast as you can. Step right into it, as if you're there right now. Imagine seeing, hearing and feeling events through your own senses. Repeat five times for each, as quickly as possible.

6. Now, sit back and send your creative imagination into the future.

See yourself fully involved in a series of typical experiences with your partner, with increasing enjoyment and enthusiasm.

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## **SOCIAL PHOBIA**

Many of the clients we meet complain that they "just can't make new friends", or if they have been sufficiently therapized, they are often convinced they are suffering from something called 'social phobia'. Some have been unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of a physician or psychiatrist who believes prescription drugs are the only way forward.

Once again, humans are social creatures. Bonding is hardwired into our brains from the dawn of time and it is necessary for our survival as individuals and as a species. Everyone has the ability

to make and form relationships. Social phobia is one of the newer additions to the list of “psychiatric disorders” as defined by the DSM series. Looking past the diagnostic gobbledegook, it’s easy to see that social phobics are afraid of talking to people for a very simple reason. They choose to avoid new social contacts by spending their time staring down at the floor, telling themselves what a horrible, dangerous thing meeting new people is, and how right they are to avoid doing it—even though everybody does it all day long, and most of us survive.

It gets stranger. One client was a social phobic whose job was to interview people. As long as he was asking questions from his list he felt fine. However, he was unable even to have lunch with his co-workers. He would take his lunch outside and lie on the back seat of his car so he would not have to make eye-contact with anybody.

For this person, speaking with people was not impossible in practice; his sticking point was he simply did not have a list of questions to ask people he was not interviewing. He had convinced himself he needed a script to communicate. His mental model actually included the ability to meet and talk to new people. What was different was the way he thought about what he was doing.

At 45 years old, he had already spent most of his life living in abject terror of social interactions. Yet in a matter of hours after putting into practice some of the skills presented in this book, meeting new people wasn’t so scary. Instead of thinking about new encounters with trepidation, he could now look forward with enthusiasm. It wasn’t a profoundly different process but, on the level of neurochemistry; it affected his body entirely differently. The simplest shifts can have profound results.

Regardless of whether you or someone else has labeled you a social phobic, if you pay attention to the bigger picture, you’ll almost certainly discover exceptions to your pattern of avoidance. There are people you meet and talk to under certain, quite specific, conditions. Equally certainly, you’ll find the way you think about these people is different from the way you think about strangers. As we often tell clients, it’s seldom that social phobics believe that strangers will be hostile to them. Rather they simply don’t have a mental model for the new people liking and responding positively to them.

Test this for yourself.



## **EXERCISE 19: FIXING YOUR SOCIAL PHOBIA**

1. Imagine meeting someone with whom you are perfectly comfortable.

Notice how you think of them. Do you see yourself interacting positively (or, at least, without tension)? Do you notice that the other person is relaxed and accepting of you? Is the picture big, bright? Is it filled with color and movement?

2. Now, think of meeting someone new.

Looking past the almost inevitable visceral response you will have, what is the stranger doing and saying? Maybe he or she looks forbidding, but, more likely you will have difficulty reading his or her responses. If you are a 'social phobic', the feeling attached to this scenario will be unmistakable. It is common for people who cannot ascertain a stranger's intentions within the first split-second of meeting to fall back to the evolutionary default position of fear and withdrawal.

3. Rate the intensity of your response, with 0 being almost non-existent to 5 being hugely upsetting.

4. Visualize both images side-by-side in your mind.

Recreate the signs and expressions of the person you know and trust on the body and face of the stranger. Simply superimpose one image over another. Relax the stranger's posture. Add a warm and welcoming smile. Put a sparkle in the person's eyes, and have him or her confidently extend a hand in greeting. Seeing through your own eyes (associated), feel yourself accepting the handshake with pleasurable anticipation as you smile back. Tell yourself with enthusiasm that this could be one of those meetings that could change your life ... for the better.

5. Check how your rating has changed.

If you need something more, cycle back to [Step 4](#) and when you've created a warm and welcoming stranger; amplify whatever degree of pleasure you feel by spinning it faster and faster as you bring the image closer, making it bigger and brighter.

6. Repeat this exercise several times.

Continue to imagine how you will respond differently and more appropriately in a number of possible situations. What you're doing is creating a new experience in your mind with a new way of handling a situation through repetition.

After you have put the above actions into effect, mark your new status: 0–1–2–3–4–5

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## **THE MAGIC QUESTION**

Ultimately improving your relationship with anyone often comes down to one, simple, probing question. If you want to know how to improve a relationship with someone, simply ask. Ask questions like:

“What needs to happen for you to feel really loved (appreciated, that you are doing a good job etc)?”

“How do you know when you are really liked by someone?”

Pay attention to how the person answers this question. He or she will tell you what needs to happen. This is the process answer you're seeking. Then, see how you can adjust your behavior to meet his or her needs and make the most out of the time you spend with this person.

In turn, if you have certain needs you'd like your partner to meet, just say so. Be specific and positive. It's better to say:

“I really like it when you hug me when you get home”

-Versus-

“You never pay me any attention anymore.”

Not everyone knows (or remembers) what lights your particular fire.

## **MEETING NEED 2:**

### **A SENSE OF CONTROL**

Before we start this next section, how would you mark your present sense of control over your life on a scale of 0-5, zero being powerless and five being in complete control? If you like, split this exercise into personal and professional life. Often people feel in control of one area and out of control in another.

Keep this number in mind while you continue reading.

Human beings are designed to adapt, even in the face of worries and fears. The moment we fail to start to adapt, to find ways of continuing to be able to control things, we often descend into anger, depression and fear. Our internal environment reflects this. We start manufacturing worse and worse chemicals to the point where the choice is simply: adapt or feel even worse.

Adapting means change, and change is extremely threatening to some people, sometimes to the point where he or she will kill themselves rather than face the unknown. Some people kill themselves slowly, one cigarette or one drink at a time. Others do it really quickly with a gun, pills or a noose. Each of these responses represents visible, and ultimately deadly, admissions of a lack of a sense of control.

In order to gain control in your life, you need to pause and think about what or who it is you're trying to control in addition to what or who seems to have control over you.

Clearly there are things you can't control. For example, you could try jumping off the roof but, unless a miracle occurs, you will not defy gravity. You could tell your boss not order you around; the outcome of this is you'll probably need to start looking for a new job. You can do your best to

control either the forces of nature or the way your friends, family and colleagues behave. Unfortunately, you are likely to fail.

In reality, if you look at any job or relationship giving you problems, you have only four options:

- A. Accept things as they are and get on with it;
- B. Try to change the other person or people;
- C. Change your own responses;
- D. Leave.

Option A will almost certainly increase your resentment, while B will carry you into newer and even more painful areas of frustration and failure. The fourth, D, may not be an option. You may have little likelihood of getting another job, or you know, deep down, that your relationship is worth fighting for.

The third option C, changing your own responses, is what we mean by control—real control. The good news is option C is also the easiest to accomplish.

Changing your responses means paying attention to the details of your own thinking patterns.

This does not mean ruminating or wallowing in the whys and wherefores of your situation. It does mean backing up and taking time to check the tone and volume of your self-talk, the kind of pictures you are creating—how bright, how focused and how big or small they are, and whether they are moving or still (for a range of possibilities, see [Appendix B](#)). If you do not pay attention to these details then you will not have that sense of control.

Once you have identified your responses and thinking patterns, you can change them in ways that create coherence. In other words, they will allow you to make sense of a world that previously failed to make sense. You are changing your mental map, your subjective experience, and replacing it with protocols that give you more, rather than less, of what you want.

The following, one of the simplest exercises in NLP, elegantly demonstrates how this works.



## **EXERCISE 20: CHANGING YOUR SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE**

The following exercise is designed to help you change the feelings associated with a particular memory or experience so that it works for you rather than against you. Most people consider memories and the feelings associated with these memories as fixed. For, example, recall as fully as possible a particularly enjoyable experience (a vacation, say). You will also re-experience some of the pleasure you felt at the time.

1. Think about a particularly pleasant experience.

Rate the degree of enjoyment you can recapture thinking about this memory on a scale of 0-to-10 with zero being no enjoyment to ten being the same intensity as the experience itself.

2. Notice *how* you are remembering the experience

Focus particularly the location of the image, its size, whether it is in color or not, moving or not, and, possibly most important, whether you see yourself in the memory or not.

Chances are picture is large, possibly life-size, somewhere towards the center of your visual field, and it will seem as if you are viewing it through your own eyes (associated). However, any variations are acceptable; your way of coding memories may be different from other peoples.

3. Next, in your mind push the image away from you towards the horizon; or imagine tracking back, rather like a movie camera.

If you were associated, see yourself begin to appear in the frame as it moves further and further away, becoming more indistinct, as the color and details drain out.

4. Test your response by checking your feelings about the image and notice any changes.

You will almost certainly feel a sense of separation from the experience, almost as though it happened a long time ago, or to somebody else.

5. Finally, put the image back where it was, restoring its former qualities.

Once you have returned your image to its former quality, move it closer to you making brighter, bigger and more intense. See yourself stepping right into the center of it. Experience it with all your senses. Notice whether this increases your good feelings. If it does, and you prefer things this way, you can leave it as it is, or you can return to the way it was at the beginning.

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As you will discover later in the book, you can use this simple technique to push away and reduce the impact of unwanted memories. If this seems a bit difficult in the beginning, don't worry. You are doing something different and in time you will become adept. Once that happens, you will be able to reduce the impact of situations or people that bother you on you while becoming more internally referenced. This means, you will start acting on decisions you make yourself, rather than looking outwards and trying to make the world (or, other people) meet your needs or relying on other people to tell you the 'right' way for you to think and to live your life.

## **A MIND OF YOUR OWN**

People struggling with issues of domination, indecisiveness or negative life-experiences often ask us to help them learn how to trust their own opinions, feelings and experiences in order to reduce the influence others have over them. The first step is learning to distinguish between your wisdom and intelligence, and the opinion of others. It's often helpful to remember that whoever is telling you who you are and what you should do, what they're telling you is still only their opinion.

The following is an exercise differentiating the opinions of others from your own ideas and experience through mental coding. Mastering this will enable you to make informed decisions,



create mental barriers against manipulation and allow you to identify from where the information used in your decision-making originates.



## **EXERCISE 21: DEVELOPING 'A MIND OF YOUR OWN'**

The first three steps illustrate how you know when an idea or thought is your own. The remaining steps allow you to identify someone else's ideas.

### **PART I: IDENTIFYING YOUR OWN THOUGHTS**

1. Recall a past experience in which you acted decisively, effectively and of your own volition.

In other words, you decided to do something because it seemed right—and it was. This is not simply a belief. It is something you actually experienced. It is both personal and incontrovertible.

2. Notice the qualities (sub-modalities) of this experience.

Once again, it is likely that you are associated into a large, moving, panoramic image. This is how you know the thoughts and opinions originate from within you. (Of course, your way of coding ownership may be different; go with whatever your particular pattern happens to be.)

3. Imagine yourself applying the above two steps every time you need to test ownership of any thought in the future.

## PART II: IDENTIFYING SOMEONE ELSE'S THOUGHTS

1. Think of a time when you were pushed to accept something you knew was someone else's opinion rather than a reflection of your own.

Just because the idea was someone else's doesn't mean it was not true or correct. This exercise is not about that. It is about providing you with a means to distinguish between original thought, yours and that of someone else. Examples of an external reference or an opinion (usually telling you who to be, how to think or what to do) might include:

"You should respect your elders."

"You just don't try hard enough."

"Love is never having to say you're sorry."

2. Recall an image of the person or people telling you what to think or do and make it smaller than the internally referenced representation (the idea you know is your own from Part I).

Put a thick, black border around it. Place a pinch of salt in each corner (some humor makes things even easier). Attach an [auditory](#) cue—the kind of half-questioning noise we make when we are not yet convinced by something someone else is trying to get us to believe or do (e.g.: *Huh?*)

Black frames, pinches of salt and your distinctive sound, to protect yourself from automatically accepting the opinion of others; simply get into the habit of placing other people's opinions of you and what you should do in this place, tagged with these characteristics.

3. Now, imagine moving along your future life.

See yourself moving confidently through life as the beliefs and opinions you encounter are automatically sorted. Your own opinions are the panoramic, self-referring ones, lined up ahead of you, as if on a road or pathway representing your future (your future timeline). The remainder, those emanating from other people, are stacked in black frames along this future timeline to one side—within easy reach should they prove useful, but, otherwise, out of your way.

**TIP:** If you feel overwhelmed by past, restrictive injunctions (other people's ideas and opinions defining how you see yourself), use this same sorting procedure for each idea. Simply imagine floating up above your past, as if it were a road or pathway (your past timeline). Move back until you reach a point before any of these thoughts and opinions were first inflicted on you. Drop down to a point before the event and then move up along your past timeline towards the present, pausing along the way wherever this new resource for approach to sorting will be useful to you.

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Deciding to own your behavior at any level brings new responsibilities and greater challenges (and sometimes, increased resistance). But, the rewards are great. Spend as much time as you need on this exercise, working your way through the list of people and situations where an emotional distance would be beneficial to you. By actively deciding which statements and opinions you own, which you find useful from other sources, and which you can safely reject, you'll be building a sense of trust and ownership regarding your own opinions, decisions and actions, and, as a consequence, your confidence and well-being.

After you've followed the above instructions, check your status again. On a scale of zero to five, with zero being brainwashed by other people's thoughts and opinions and five being completely responsible for your own thoughts and opinions, how do you rank your ability to discern between your ideas and the opinions of others? Rate yourself now: *0-1-2-3-4-5*

### **MEETING NEED 3:**

#### **DEVELOPING AN OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK**

Some people are genetically predisposed towards optimism, and this makes it easier for them to see the sunny side of life. Other people are genetically predisposed to cancer, or athletics or art, but that doesn't mean they'll automatically get the disease or sign an NBA contract.

Predisposition is simply an edge, not a sentence. Therefore, we remain convinced that how people think and what they do is the real deciding factor. Optimism, a major aspect of the art of Being Happy, is a learnable skill.

An optimist wakes up in the morning, and, instead of having a list of things to feel bad about if they don't get done, has an even longer list of things he or she is going to enjoy doing.

## **OPTIMIST VS PESSIMIST**

Consider this scenario. You're sitting home waiting for the plumber to arrive. Like most in-home appointments, he gave you a four-hour window. You have no idea if he'll arrive at the beginning, the end, or, even later than that. If he arrives toward the beginning of the window, you'll feel great. The rest of the day is yours. However, if he arrives toward the end, you could be sitting at home waiting, plucking your hair out by the roots, cursing him for not getting there sooner. This is the scenario a pessimist would choose. An optimist would see the time as an opportunity to do something good: read a book, watch a great DVD, call some friends and catch up. Those four hours are full of exciting possibilities. Optimist or pessimist, the choice is yours. Either you spend your time in stress, worrying about whether the plumber will ever come, or you spend your time making yourself smarter and happier, confident that he *will* come. Sooner or later, it really does not matter. You will put the time to good use either way.

A classic story sums this whole idea up neatly.

A man had twin sons. One he feared was far too optimistic, the other too pessimistic. One Christmas he thought of a plan to even things out. While the boys were sleeping, he crept into their rooms with a collection of carefully thought-out gifts. He filled the pessimist's room with the most beautiful and expensive toys he could find; the optimist's room he filled with horse manure.

The following day it, he went to the pessimist's room with a sense of excitement, only to find that the boy poking his toys dispiritedly, complaining that he knew they'd break or would run out of batteries, so it wasn't really worth even playing with them.

Somewhat disappointed, the father went to the optimist's room, confident that at least he'd find this boy's overwhelming positivity curbed by the huge pile of steaming horse manure around his bed.

Instead, he found the boy, knee deep in muck, whistling happily and shoveling away. He looked up, saw his dumbstruck father standing at the door, and said happily, "Hey Dad, I figure with all this crap around, there must be a pony."

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The application of the principles and techniques arising out of NLP has made many deep inroads into people's consciousness—the most important of which is to give people hope.

Modern psychotherapy thrives on labeling clients. People are defined as clinically depressed, schizophrenic, eating-disordered etc. NLP is not about labeling. We have never found a cure in a label, but we have found an awful lot of impediments in them! Rather, our approach is so fundamentally different that, no matter how many other 'experts' clients have seen, they almost always know that what is about to happen to them is nothing like whatever has gone before.

One client, a 23-year-old man who was unable to read, turned up for his first session with a two-foot thick pile of reports from psychiatrists around the world, all of whom said exactly the same thing—that he was “unteachable”. Since his parents had spent tens of thousands of dollars seeking help, it was fairly obvious that they were right. Those experts, at least, had been unable to teach him anything. They suggested he was “learning-disabled”. But, this response, as we often remark, should more accurately be labeled a teaching, rather than a learning disability.

The first thing the young man was asked to do was to put the pile of reports on to a grate and set fire to them. At first he was horrified. These reports represented who he was. They were written by some of the world's best-known authorities and they said this was so. After some reluctance, he finally did it. His relief was almost palpable. For the first time, he began to relax. With relaxation he allowed a glimmer of hope to creep in ... something upon which we could build. Within a very short time, he was reading with confidence and ease.

There's no great secret about how he learned to read. The difference was simply that all his other authorities had systematically removed hope from the equation. One expert even suggested he become reconciled to his illiteracy.

The simple truth is, if people don't believe that things can get better, they won't try anything different. In NLP terms, the things that help people believe they can do something new are called 'convincers'. Often it requires only one convincer—a single new behavior—to blow out the belief that you can't do whatever it is you would like to do now.

One of our intentions with this book is to encourage you to put on some rose colored glasses—not so rosy that you end up doing stupid things, but rosy enough to be able to make plans and take action. We want you to be able to anticipate that life can be filled with aspiration and enjoyment.

The truth is, the more you learn to make the daily processes of life fun, the better life will work for you. Optimists make a point of finding something to enjoy in almost every situation they find themselves in. Initially this may be a choice. However, with practice it becomes a habit. Most highly successful people are almost compulsive about what they do, not because they are moving away from some kind of unpleasant situation, but because they enjoy what they are doing.

One client, one of the youngest multimillionaires in the world, is about as compulsive as compulsives get. He leaves for work at four in the morning. At night he is the last person to leave. He loves every moment of what he does. His challenge, the question that plagues him is, "How can I get my employees to be as motivated as I am?"

Like many wealthy people, he thinks that offering his employees more money is the way to do it. Ironically, money is not what motivates him. He goes to work each day because he enjoys what he does. He enjoys what he does because he *expects* to enjoy it. At the end of the day when he reflects, he remembers all the great things that happened. He overlooks, or at least minimizes, the bad.

Whether you fix other people's water-pipes for a living or you are a surgeon, a psychotherapist, a secretary, or a pensioner, *you can enjoy every single task that you do* and get a sense of satisfaction from completing it. You can *choose* to look forward to your next task or undertaking, whether it is having lunch, talking to a friend or walking down the street. Because you are enjoying it, your body will automatically produce feel-good chemicals in your brain. Your brain (and your body) will work better—and best of all, your nervous system will be singing, rather than buzzing with stress.

The following exercise will allow you to develop your sense of optimism.



## **EXERCISE 22: DEVELOPING A SENSE OF OPTIMISM**

1. Take a moment to think back to a time when you were really looking forward to something.

You may have to go all the way back to childhood, to those times like Christmas Eve, or the morning of your birthday. This should be a time when you were completely, unreservedly happy in your anticipation.

2. Amplify the attractive qualities of the experience.

Close your eyes. Now visualize the experience. Make the picture big and shiny; turn up the sounds of excitement until the whole experience sings with anticipation. Then flip the picture around. Picture yourself stepping inside from the back and melding into the self in that image.

3. Bathe in that good feeling for a while—and lift your head and smile.

The physical act of pulling up the corners of the mouth directly and positively affects your mood. (113) Make the feeling that accompanies the smile even stronger by focusing on it. Now spin that feeling throughout your body. Feel yourself, quite literally, lightening up.

4. Now, mentally run through an average day, from waking up in the morning to drifting off to sleep at night while holding on to this feeling.

As you're recalling an average day, carry through this experience of joyful anticipation each step of the way. Do this several times, amplifying your responses each time, remembering that the future is only as bright as the pictures in your mind.

5. Throughout the day, test your optimism response.

Test your response by going back to see if you can feel any kind of lack of enthusiasm for the rest of today, and all the days and nights to come—and, notice how difficult this is. It is a lot less easy, simply because you have disconnected the neural pathway that made feeling unenthusiastic possible.

6. For the next seven days, run this protocol three times a day and, when you reach [Step Four](#), pop in an upcoming task—anything from washing the dishes to doing your taxes.

True, if you work at it, you could get back to the pain and boredom, but you will discover it no longer comes naturally, even though you are thinking the same thoughts. This is how you develop freedom of choice.

At the end of the week, mark your level of optimism on the scale of: 0–1–2–3–4–5

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#### **MEETING NEED 4:**

#### **PREDICTABILITY AND ANTICIPATION**

The ability to predict certain events with reasonable accuracy has served our species as a survival tool. Yet like all tools, predictability can be ineffective in the wrong hands or used without correct techniques.

Centuries ago if a hunter made a successful kill in a certain part of the savannah, he'd be justified in predicting that the same thing could occur the next day in the same location. This ability to anticipate the outcome of his behavior and that of his fellow tribesmen undoubtedly improved his and his community's chances of survival. Equally, if he was attacked by a predator, he needed to be able to learn from the experience, to anticipate the possibility of it occurring again so he could avoid losing his life the next time he went out to hunt. If his fear overwhelmed him, causing him to be so paranoid that he never hunted again, he'd have starved to death.

Early humans had to develop strategies that allowed them to judge with a fair degree of accuracy what was likely to happen next. As Rockefeller University physiologist Jay Weiss elegantly demonstrated, even rats cope better with electric shocks if they hear a warning buzzer a moment or two being zapped. His study showed that knowing the shock is about to come results in fewer ulcers and other degenerative signs of stress than if the shocks occur randomly. [\(114\)](#)



Whether anticipation reduces the impact of the stressful event while it actually happens has yet to be established. What is clear from several studies is that a person's (or rat's) ability to relax between stressful events is heightened when either can predict a threatening or painful event.

This is a question of balance. People who predict disaster at every turn seldom relax and quite often drive themselves to an early grave. As with our rose-colored glasses above, we want people to temper their optimism with realism. Temperance ensures survival, health and well-being.

Granted, people can't predict everything that's likely to happen, although this doesn't stop many from trying. Consider the possibilities, though, if what *could* be predicted reasonably accurately helped people cope better and move beyond even very demanding challenges. If the rats in Weiss's experiments could speak, they might tell us that by learning to anticipate an electric shock, they could fortify themselves against the discomfort simply through the knowledge that they knew they would survive. Humans have an even greater advantage. We can anticipate consciously, and thereby change our response.

Every business executive and successful entrepreneur knows, for every important plan or project, alternative strategies must be planned in the event things do not go as anticipated. Planning in the event of failure is not the same as planning *for* failure. Both your primary and your backup plans should have coping and achieving something on, or near, target as their endpoint. In extreme cases, that endpoint may be, or include, survival. We regard that as a result.

The following exercise is designed to improve your ability to anticipate and respond appropriately to life's inevitable curve-balls.



### **EXERCISE 23: ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES, ACHIEVING SUCCESS**

1. Think about the various challenges you've faced in your life to date.

Here is a truth: You survived them all, even though your coping strategies at the time might not have been as elegant or as effective as you'd prefer. The fact is you survived. We know that because you are reading this. In the process of doing whatever you did to get through your crises, you anticipated, or at the very least hoped for survival. Guess what? It worked.

2. Close your eyes and select one incident from your past that was frightening but you made it through.

Select one incident in the past when you knew you'd survived a difficult challenge. Step into the moment when you realized that you could cope with the problem. See, hear and feel everything you experienced at the time, in particular, recalling the feelings of escape, relief, even euphoria.

3. With your eyes still closed, allow the feelings to rise up in you. Loop this feeling over and over, like replaying your favorite song, spinning the sensations faster.

As the feelings spin faster and faster, allow them to expand outwards until they permeate your entire body. Feel these sensations surrounding every organ, system and cell, until they extend a few inches outside your body, enclosing you completely in a transparent shell of shimmering energy. Know that only neutral and positive thoughts and actions can penetrate this shell in either direction. Any other energy, especially potentially damaging events, will be blocked, or transformed on contact.

4. Picture the past timeline you used in a previous exercise.

Float up and back above your past timeline, bringing the spinning feelings with you. Drop down in the moment immediately following your birth, and then move rapidly up through all your past experiences to the present day as if you were actually reliving them all now, completely protected inside your energy shell. Allow these new resources to transform the way you've been relating to your past experiences. Trust your unconscious to know what to change and how. Simply hold on to the positive, spinning feelings as you rocket into the present.

Every so often, one of the challenges from your past fires at you at supersonic speed. Hear the sound and feel the impact as it hits your energy shell. It can't hurt you anymore. See a flash of colored light, and give it a distinctive new sound, *Splat!* (Choose a sound that works for you). One

by one, the challenges from the past hit your protective energy shell, explode and are transformed into a new and positive source of power for you. Feel a jolt of power each time the missile hits. Literally, what didn't kill you has made you stronger.

5. When you reach the present on your life timeline, settle in and enjoy the feeling of buzzing energy as you watch yourself moving into the future.

Your future timeline now has a secondary timeline running parallel to it. This is where you place your alternative plans—the ones you can fall back on if your original plan fails.

As your protected future self moves confidently ahead, he or she has the dexterity to dodge many challenges. Sometimes, you will switch easily on to your secondary line, and then move back on to your primary future timeline. As you zoom into the future see any challenges you encounter slamming into your protective shell. They can't hurt you. They can only be transformed in flashes of light, followed by your distinctive sound. You may even represent the transformation of negative into positive energy by increasing the shimmer or glow of your shell, or changing its color.

6. Repeat steps five and six several times.

The purpose of this is to familiarize yourself with the process of anticipating challenges and become increasingly adept at responding to them. Know that each time you move through to the other side of a challenging experience with the ability to cope, you're literally training your nervous system to become stronger, wiser and able to flourish.

After completing this exercise, measure your confidence at facing future challenges on a scale of 0-5 with zero being terrified with no confidence and five being confident that you'll find a way to overcome whatever life chooses to throw at you: *0-1-2-3-4-5*

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## **MEETING NEED 5:**

### **DISSIPATING ENTROPY (Restoring balance)**

Western medicine has made great inroads in fighting infectious diseases and dealing with acute disorders. However, little attention is paid to encouraging people to spend more time engaging in self-enriching activities like painting, dancing, writing, all the wonderful activities through which the human spirit restores peace and balance to itself.

Most New Age therapies (and some of the ancient ones) teach that the more energy you have, the better you will be. Of course, this is not true. Regardless of whether you enjoy something or not, all input translates in your mind as stress. Without the mechanisms for rebalancing (that is, dissipating entropy), you would explode with a heart attack or an aneurysm within minutes.

Instinctively we know that allowing energy to build up unchecked is dangerous. People talk about 'letting off steam', and they have hundreds of ways of doing this with varying degrees of success. They bowl, jog, hunt, doodle, fidget, paint pictures, scream, and even work out. As human beings, we do any number of things to distract our minds and burn off excess energy. Each of these forms of dissipation is useful, but tends to be random, and less beneficial than it could be. The simple truth is, the more systematically and regularly you direct excess energy into creative and regenerative endeavors, the more quickly and effectively you will restore balance to your life.

An interesting correlation we have noticed over the years is that the greater the number of expressive outlets a person has, the greater the methods they have available to communicate with their unconscious minds. The more they communicate with their unconscious minds, the more they experience that transcendent feeling of getting in 'flow', being in 'the groove', or, more simply, happily 'losing' themselves in whatever they are doing.

We have all experienced this. We start working on something and we become so engrossed that the next thing we realize, ten hours have gone by. It is a great feeling. The key to achieving this level of pleasurable balance is attending to detail with detached awareness. If you watch a master gardener at work, you will notice he is calm, measured and his attention apparently turned inward. At the same time he is responding to every leaf and branch and handful of soil in his care. Paying attention to detail, both internal and external is one way to overcome entropy.

Consciousness is the key to detailed attention. Human consciousness functions as an organizing principle. The more you develop and apply your consciousness, the greater control you will retain

over balancing the energy and entropy in your life. With greater control, the more creative you become, and the more choices you discover.

Being Happy, like being healthy, is an ongoing, dynamic and interactive process. The more you take control of the process, the greater the benefits you experience. At least part of your life (usually the part where you go to work and earn a living) involves massive engagement. Even if, like the young multimillionaire previously mentioned you enjoy every moment, it still impacts your brain as stress. Since evolution has provided you with only two functional categories, that of growth and that of protection, it is vitally important that you protect yourself throughout your life. In other words, you need to effectively dissipate entropy. (115) Cells that are not growing are dying. Muscles that are not being used are atrophying. If you do not succeed in dissipating the waste products of energy consumption, you risk shifting your entire system into a state of increasing chaos. This often manifests in two classes of symptomatic behavior: anger (marked by irritability and explosive outbursts) and withdrawal (usually characterized by anxiety and depression).

As any gym addict knows, vigorous activity goes a long way towards dissipating stress. Recent studies show that regular exercise has the power to alter neurotransmitters in the brain's frontal cortex and the hippocampus (both parts of your emotional circuitry). Exercise acts on the neurohormones that govern the stress response, thus improving the functioning of the vagus nerve, an important modulator of stressful feelings. (116) The good news is you may need much less exercise than was at first believed. British professor of exercise biology James Timmons has found that short bursts of intense activity (four to six 60-second sprints three times a week) may be enough to cut the risk of heart diseases and Type II Diabetes in as little as 14 days. (117)

Beneficial as it is, exercise has limitations. Researcher and neuroscientist Steven W Porges believes the calm that follows excessive jogging or some other aerobic exercise is more analgesic than curative. (118) Vigorous exercise attacks stress at the visceral level, meaning it operates within the 'fight' branch of the fight or flight response.

These findings reinforce much of what we have previously stated. Appropriate activity, balanced with good friends, frequent laughter and face-to-face contact with other people, as well as regulation of your heart-rate through meditation, self-hypnosis, yoga and breathing techniques, represent important activities for rewiring your neural circuitry.

Therefore our best advice? Keep engaged and moving while setting aside time to pursue some of the techniques aimed at deploying the higher system through creative engagement like drawing, writing, reading, gardening, photography or anything else that you enjoy. We suggest you begin a

program that includes regular physical exercise. If you are not sure where to start or have little free time, try experimenting with Professor Timmons' short sprint approach previously described and combine it with one of the self-regulating techniques in [Appendix C](#).

After three weeks, score yourself. How calm and balanced do you feel in all aspects of your life? Rank yourself on a scale of zero to five with zero being totally stressed-out and five being completely stress-free: 0-1-2-3-4-5

In the following chapter, we invite you to embark on arguably the most important aspect of Being Happy...learning to identify and apply your unique sense of purpose, mission and meaning.

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# CHAPTER ELEVEN: FINDING YOUR MEANING AND MISSION

In this chapter:

- How to keep your life on track;
  - Your motivational hot-buttons;
  - Why affirmations don't work;
  - Rapid-response mission control.
- 

Businesses create mission statements to inspire the confidence of customers and to rally employees around the company flag. Admittedly, many of these statements are created by high-minded executives or corporate consultants, engraved on to a brass plate, and left in the foyer of the company's headquarters, never to be referred to again. All too often the sentiments, however admirable, have little or no resonance in the hearts and minds of employers or employees. The reason? Insufficient attention is paid to the true values upon which the company was originally founded. The phrases seem soulless. They are not rooted in what is really important to the people involved or to the products or services they provide.

Values represent the unconscious drivers of our thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They are what we believe at the deepest level is important about any area of our life. Values are the 'hot buttons' that motivate or dissuade us throughout our lives.

Companies in touch with their real values, those that inspire individuals and groups of like-minded people, inevitably create value for their customers and their employees. People sense the difference between high-minded rhetoric and a genuine, passionately held commitment. The companies whose values are genuine and resonant become and remain household names. They maintain the trust and confidence of their customers and staff, in even the stormiest economic and political weather.

A successful mission statement acts as an organizing principle, a moral compass for everyone involved in that business' operations. When meaning and mission combine, something greater than the sum of its parts emerges. When that happens, the company's chances of surviving and flourishing are dramatically increased.

## **THE BUSINESS OF YOU UNLIMITED**

What do meaning and mission statements have to do with people adept in the art of Being Happy?

The answer is ... *everything!*

As we said in the previous chapter, developing optimism is a key part of our Being Happy program. When we speak of optimism, we mean more than looking at the glass as half-full. We want people to look for glasses that are brimming over with opportunity. We want people to look past the limits of a finite container. We want you to think more expansively than you have ever thought before.

Of course, none of this will work unless it aligns with your deepest needs and purposes. Identifying and implementing these needs and purposes requires targeted specificity.

Many people believe repeating affirmations, such as, "You are already healthy, wealthy and living with the person of your dreams", will accomplish this. This rarely works largely due to the fact these thoughts often do not represent the person's true values. Values generally are held unconsciously and, therefore, you may not notice a conflict at first. What you will notice is that you spend a lot of time and effort on widening the gap between what you want and what you get. Simply repeating something that is not true now is unlikely to make it true later. The exceptions to this are:

1. If the statement is driven by your deepest values;
2. You do something to achieve it that is different from what you have been doing so far.



## **TO BE SUCCESSFUL, STUDY THE SUCCESSFUL**

The people who have impressed us by their attitudes and actions all displayed a deeply held purpose or mission. Meaning and mission, we strongly believe, explain both the 'why' and the 'how' of their success. The challenge to those of us applying the principles of NLP is in figuring out how these high achievers do it and translating their actions into a process anyone can duplicate to create similar results.

Successful people often do not consciously understand or even know that they are making their way through life with mission and purpose. In many cases it is intuitive. Many have been surprised and delighted when they applied the process outlined below to discover how close the match was between what they did, how they did it and the feeling that they somehow just knew when something was right. This is one of the pillars of what cheerful, optimistic and successful people call intuition or 'gut feeling'. Consciously or unconsciously they take readings from an inner compass that helps them navigate the white water of even the most challenging situations.

The rest of this chapter outlines a simple and effective way to uncover your deepest values, and to create a personal mission statement that will help carry you through good times and bad. Once you have successfully completed this exercise, you will have a valuable tool that allows you to think more clearly, lower stress levels and to decide between two apparently competing courses of action. You will develop flexibility and an enthusiasm for living life 'up'. Of course, there will be side-effects, including increased personal magnetism, apparently inexplicable coincidences that support your plans, and improved health.



### **EXERCISE 24: CREATING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

Effective mission statements have three qualities in common: passion, purpose and direction. Your mission statement should also respect and support your values regarding your relationships with other people, yourself, and the world. Using a process we call 'chunking' (breaking information into progressively smaller bits), the following exercise will help you uncover your unique spin on these qualities. Take your time. Prepare to surprise yourself.

Answer these three questions:

1. What is important to me about my relationships with other people?

Write down your answer, asking yourself:

“What’s important about that?”

“What does that give me that is even bigger than simply connecting with others?”

Keep repeating the questions until you can go no further. You will know you have exhausted your introspection when you feel there is nothing beyond this core value. Your answer will take the form of a nominalization (an abstract noun), often representing some expansive, even spiritual, quality. Words such as ‘love’, ‘fulfillment’, ‘belonging’ are often encountered.

2. What is important to me about my relationship with myself?

Repeat the process above until you arrive at the core value(s) relating to yourself.

3. What is important to me about my relationship with my world?

This is an opportunity to explore your deepest feelings about your ties to the greater human community on this planet and the specific environment in which you live.

4. Once you complete the identification process above, the next step is the creative part of the exercise. On a separate piece of paper write the following words:

“My mission in life is to ...”

Complete this sentence using each of the three key qualities you listed in steps 1, 2 and 3. If your three qualities had been, say, ‘love’ ‘peace’ and ‘regeneration’, your first draft might read:

“My mission is to seek loving and peaceful ways to help myself and others regenerate our relationships with each other and with our world.”

Do not worry if your first draft seems clumsy or cheesy. Nobody else needs to see it and you are not being graded. You are entirely free of judgment. What is important is that you write from the heart.

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## **REFINING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

From now on, you will be refining the sentence in successive drafts until you create the sentence which resonates best with you. It will be the statement that somehow just feels right. You will intuitively know this.

The following tips will help you to perfect your mission statement:

Using whatever time you have on this planet is important if you wish to live a purposeful and fulfilling life. Try to incorporate the concept of time into the next draft, if it's not already there. For example:

“My mission in life is to use my time, with complete focus, to seek out opportunities to help myself and others find loving and peaceful ways to regenerate our relationships with each other and with our world.”

Convert as many nominalizations and vague descriptive words as you can into action words to restore a sense of dynamic process. Recast yourself as the agent of action. Make sure the mission is stated in the present tense. For example:

“I use this and every other moment to help myself and others find loving and peaceful ways of regenerating the way we relate with each other and our world.”

Feel free to rewrite your mission statement as many times as you need, refining it until you arrive at a sentence that triggers an almost visceral response, that *aha!* moment of internal resonance. You will know when it is the right mission for you.

## **HOW TO USE YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

Commit to reviewing your mission statement at least once a day. To make this easy, write it on an index card that fits easily into your wallet or pocketbook. Or tape it to your shaving or make-up mirror so it is one of the first things you see each morning.

You can also write or print a larger version to tape up on your computer screen, or the wall of your bedroom or office. You might enjoy creating a special version for this purpose, decorating it with colors, sketches, photographs, or pictures cut out from magazines that symbolize one or another aspect of the sentiments contained in your mission statement. By harnessing the natural power of your unconscious mind, especially your internal compass, the Reticular Activating System (RAS), regular review of your personal mission statement begins to organize and fine-tune your experience, thus allowing you to control of your time and your life.

## **MAKING CHOICES AND DECISIONS**

Once you have created a mission statement that incorporates your deepest feelings about the most effective and enjoyable use of your time and your commitment to living meaningful a life of passion and purpose, use it to help you make decisions that otherwise might confuse you. Simply review each alternative in turn and ask yourself which option fits the terms and conditions of your mission statement most closely. In nearly every instance, the best decision for you at that time of your life will re-activate the same internal response you encountered when you arrived at the final version of your mission statement.

## **ONLY ONE MISSION?**

Often we are asked if personal mission statements are changeable. Some people feel uncomfortable creating such a powerful statement; they fear it will narrow their choices rather than increase their opportunities.

Our answer? Of course it is changeable! In fact it must be dynamic. Life throws curves; we learn, and as we learn sometimes we change our positions and our ideas. Your personal mission

statement is a creation of your infinitely powerful brain. The brain is the only organ we know of that has the capacity to evolve itself. Each time you have a new thought, are exposed to a new idea or take on a new behavior, your brain creates new neural connections. In Being Happy, expect to develop and grow. As this happens, your mission will also develop and grow.

We recommend you review your personal mission statement once a year. Feel free to rewrite it whenever necessary. Welcome new thoughts and feelings. Consider the many ways of experiencing yourself and the world around you that will naturally arise. See if any of these add to your mission or change it. Then congratulate yourself. Having a mission and purpose in life, it is called being alive.

Feel free to create lesser mission statements to help you handle specific tasks in time-effective and rewarding ways. Mission statements help you stay in charge and succeed. The following exercise will show you how.

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## **EXERCISE 25: CREATING RAPID RESPONSE MISSION STATEMENTS**

Consider a task at hand, something you are working on at home or at work. This could be a relationship, a project, a new business, home improvements or helping your child. Simply pick a task.

Ask yourself: "If I could achieve the best possible outcome here, what would that be?"

1. Describe the ultimate outcome as richly as possible, giving full attention to all your senses.

Imagine you are experiencing and enjoying this outcome right now and write down what you see, hear and feel. Ask yourself, "What's most important to me about achieving this outcome?"

Keep chunking, each time asking the question, “What’s important to me about (whatever the answer was to the question that preceded it)?”

2. Review your answers to the questions and re-arrange them in order of importance.

3. Underline the key nominalizations (e.g., peace, love, success, approval, happiness, etc...).

Use these as a basis for your first draft.

4. Rewrite your statement several times and fine-tune it for clarity.

Make sure you restore process or action to any nominalizations. Usually this can be accomplished by adding the suffix ‘ing’ to the end of each word. For example the word relationship becomes relating; love becomes loving etc... Make sure your statement is in the present tense and that it includes the concept of time.

5. Check the statement against the original task or project to make sure it dovetails neatly.

6. Make regular checks along the way to ensure your actions stay aligned with your important values.

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## **AUTOMATING YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

Since the brain sometimes has difficulty in distinguishing between useful and not-so-useful behaviors, you need to prime it to ensure you keep moving in the right direction. Read your mission statement(s) regularly. Step into your visualized outcome often. Use all your senses to create a virtual-reality representation of living every moment embedded in its principles. Repeat this step last thing at night and first thing in the morning.

As you go forward through life, measure your progress. Do this by noticing what is different and better, rather than by what still has not been resolved or remains a problem. With regular review, you increase your automatic tendency towards the right action or response. You learn to trust your instincts. The more useful and appropriate your feelings, behaviors and responses are, the less time or inclination you have for feeling down, overwhelmed or perplexed by any situation you encounter. This is the ultimate goal: you in control. When you are in control, Being Happy is one of life's rewards.

Of course we want to make this process as simple as possible, something that eventually you will do instinctively without needing consciously to follow specific steps. The secret to this is repetition. Do it often and soon it will become automatic, rather like the way you learned to ride a bike, read or walk. Before long, you will simply know what to do and you will just do it. Getting to that point requires embedding it into your life. The following exercise makes that possible as quickly as possible.



## **EXERCISE 26: EMBEDDING YOUR MISSION STATEMENT IN YOUR LIFE**

1. As intensely as possible, think about someone or something for which you are deeply grateful.

Make the feeling of gratitude as unconditional as possible. Recalling your love for a small child or a pet works for many people. As you think about this particular feeling, locate where this feeling/emotion resides in your body. Often it is in the chest, around the area of the heart. Some people experience deep gratitude as a warm, flowing sensation. Not always of course. Wherever you feel that emotion of gratitude and love, and exactly how you feel it is right for you.

2. Return to your personal mission statement and imagine what your life will be like when you are living and working fully in accordance with the principles and passion of that mission.

If a clear representation of this future reality fails to come easily, simply pretend you know what it will be like and imagine it anyway.

3. Take that mission and everything it entails and draw it into the center of where you feel that deep, unconditional acceptance.

4. Identify five different future events involving all major areas of your life: work, play, love, health, spirituality.

Run each scenario exactly the way you would like it to play out, projecting into it all the emotions, imagery and self-talk that ideally would be involved. Pull each of those scenarios into the location in your body where you felt unconditional acceptance.

5. Now turn inward, speaking directly to your inner or unconscious mind.

Invite those five events to act as templates for other areas in your life, so that each of the five can represent five other events, even those you might not have thought of consciously yet. Ask your unconscious to make all necessary internal arrangements so that each of those, in turn, will represent five more situations, and so on, until your entire future is filled with these qualities. Once you have done this, you can begin to see amazing new possibilities as the true meaning of your personal mission opens up.

6. Commit to looking for and noticing whatever is different and better in your experience from this point on.

Simply continue with your life as normal, with one important change. Rather than logging mistakes and failures, notice the changes for the better as they begin automatically unfolding.

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BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, make sure you've developed and embedded your personal mission statement. From this point on, it will act as an organizing principle for the rest of the Being Happy process.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE: NOW AND ZEN

### Learning to Live in Time

In this chapter:

- Time as a personal construct;
- The timeline as a diagnostic tool;
- Navigating your way through time;
- Problem-solving with a temporal shift.

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Before you read any further in this chapter, take a moment to do the following little experiment:



### EXERCISE 27: VISUALIZING YOUR TIMELINE

- 1) Visualize your past as if it were a road or pathway along which you have been travelling.

Don't worry about putting in any experiences or incidents. Simply imagine a pathway as if it were a physical route, beginning at your birth and extending to the present.

2) Point to where this road seems to begin.

This is the start of your past timeline. Notice its angle as it approaches your present, to where you are now.

3) Next, think of the future as if it were a road or a pathway.

Notice the direction it appears to follow. This is your future timeline.

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## **HOW DIFFERENT CULTURES PICTURE TIME**

When a Westerner is asked to visualize the past, he is likely to point behind him, or to one side. The future is in front, or continues on to the opposite side.

To Chinese, Japanese and Indian Buddhists, Shintoists and Hindu, however, time is cyclical—a kind of infinite pulsation, in which the Big Bang is just a single beat in an endless, unbounded process of creation and dissolution. For the Aymara, a tribe living in the remote Andes highlands, on the other hand, the past lies in front of them. Since they haven't seen it yet, the future simply doesn't feature in their world view. [\(119\)](#) The Aymara are, by Western standards, an extraordinarily patient people, thinking nothing of spending half a day waiting for a bus.

Then, there are the Pirahã, a tiny tribe who live along the Maici River in Southwest Brazil. The Pirahã organize time around events that occur in their environment. With no words for past or present, these happy and harmonious people eat, dance, play their musical instruments, make love and sleep according to the position of the sun, the flow of the river, the arrival of a certain species of birds, or simply when it feels right, rather than according to the clock. [\(120\)](#)

## THE INFLUENCES OF TIME ON YOUR EXPERIENCE

From its earliest days, Neuro-Linguistic Programming recognized time as one of the more important methods people use to organize their experiences. Despite certain commonalities within cultures, each of us has our own subtly distinctive way of distinguishing between the past and the future. Additionally, the speed with which time seems to pass may differ, not only between individuals, but according to your state of health, what you are doing, the recreational drugs or medications you might be taking, your body temperature and even your social class. [\(121\)](#)

From all of the above, it is easy to recognize that time is a personal construct. It is part of your subjective model of reality. As such, it will have a direct bearing on your experience.

The way people talk about time provides us with important clues as to how it's likely to influence their experience. Time often seems to have an energy, purpose and direction of its own. Time drags, flies or disappears. You either move through time or time carries you with it. Sometimes, it's experienced as an object that you use, lose, save, spend or waste. Occasionally, you can manage time. Then again time is rarely on your side so you continue to put things off.

Time is a concept, rather than a thing. Your timeline simply represents how your unconscious codes time in terms of distance and space. The coding you use can either weaken or empower you.

Your personal timeline represents something far more complex than itself. Think of it as a metaphor, simply one manner in which you structure your perceptions and understandings of yourself and the world around you. [\(122\)](#) Logically, then, it follows that by changing the perception, you change the experience.

Consider a person who seems incredibly well-organized, who knows exactly where everything is, makes and keeps appointments meticulously, and plans, not only to get his work done, but also to have fun. Now contrast that with someone who's never on time, makes promises that he never keeps and just can't seem to keep up with the people around him. Who would you prefer as a friend or an employee?

When you identify and learn to manage your own timeline, you will have a powerful tool that permits you to both diagnose problems and to create a more appropriate and appealing future. Consider when you feel anxious. Anxiety essentially is mentally projecting into the future a

possibly negative outcome, whereas feeling depressed is almost inevitably associated with a focus on the past. Passion, joy, peace, bliss, all the Zen-like peak flow experiences manifest exclusively in the present tense. The sense of an 'infinite present' is characteristic of many experiences in deep meditation.

Despite having extraordinarily accurate biological clocks, humans have developed a multitude of ways in which they experience linear time. Even if you play tennis at an average level of competence, you've already experienced your ability to coordinate dozens, if not hundreds, of movements, some of them lasting less than 1/10 of a second, simply to be able to hit the ball. Then we have the times that appear in "slow motion", such as during a fall or car accident. Looking back at such an incident, people can usually remember amazingly fine details, as if recorded on some super-high definition camera.

Generally, if you have lots to do, time seems to pass quickly. If not, it drags. The younger you are, the slower time passes. By the time you hit middle age, twenty years ago can seem like yesterday.

Scientists remain divided about the significance of the brain's dependency upon countless clusters of neurons rather than a single biological clock for our sense of time. They agree, however, that how humans sense the passage of time is remarkably easily distorted. If it can be distorted, it can also be molded to more desirable outcomes. This is one of the tools of Being Happy—the ability to manipulate your experience of time, the sequence and significance of events, to your advantage. Not doing so can have unfortunate and confusing consequences.

## **TIME SHIFTING**

One client, who complained of stress at his highly placed government workplace, arrived at his first session speaking in a low, slow, drawn-out tone of voice. When he moved his body or made a gesture, it seemed as if he was struggling through warm molasses. He spoke about not having any friends, being unable to "fit in". Conventional medicine described him as having a "depressed affect". When asked if he was aware of how slowly and deliberately (and how boringly) he spoke, he shrugged. "It's not me," he said. "The world just moves too fast."

We asked him to close his eyes and listen to an electronic metronome set at different speeds until he found one he felt matched the sixty beats a second of external clock time. Needless to say, his estimate was far from accurate. Since he was already drifting into an altered state, he was

allowed to sit for some time, listening to the metronome accompanied by a number of suggestions about resetting his internal time-keeping mechanisms. During this time, we gradually adjusted the metronome until it was set at 60 beats per minute. When the client opened his eyes, the rate and pitch of his voice were normal and his movements natural and easy. He reported that the world seemed to have slowed down to a manageable speed and he felt relaxed and confident—even though he had no subjective awareness that his speech and mannerisms had changed dramatically.

The above is an illustration of a simple NLP technique. Notice no drugs, long-term counseling or intensive group therapy sessions were needed.

## **THROUGH TIME AND IN TIME**

Despite scientific interest in time and its impact on our subjective experience, NLP remains the only methodology offering practical techniques to manipulate its effects. The early developers of NLP made two broad distinctions in the way people code time. They accomplished this by asking a series of questions about how each subject remembered certain repetitive tasks. From this information, they mapped the direction from past to future and then determined whether the timeline appeared to be outside the subject or to pass through his or her body.

The first pattern, in which your timeline seems to extend from one side of your body to the other, often in front of you, is called *Through Time*. Where the timeline passes through your body from back to front, the pattern is known as *In Time*. Thousands of subjects from all walks of life have demonstrated that even within these two constraints, a massive number of variations are possible.

Go back to the [exercise you did at the beginning](#) of this chapter and review the directions in which your past and future timelines run. Cultural differences notwithstanding, your own time-metaphor may reflect your present state of mind and your current state of physical and emotional health.

*Through Time* people sometimes report feeling detached from the flow of life, while those with *In Time* coding sometimes suffer from partial amnesia, particularly if their past is organized directly behind their heads, almost as if it is hidden from view. Heroin addicts who relapse often report a past situated behind the head, almost as if it is hidden from view. This coding suggests an inability to see the past and therefore to learn from past experience.

Many people struggling with chronic problems (and who are not Aymara), as well as those who complain they do not or cannot learn from mistakes, organize their past in front of them. Their behavior suggests they can't avoid past patterns and are condemned to repeat them in an endless *Groundhog Day*-type loop. For these people, their future timeline is either behind them or totally obscured.

Another variation occurs where past and future are organized in a V-shape in front of the subject. This may be useful, especially where rapid comparisons between past events and future actions are necessary for making appropriate plans and decisions. However, if the two arms of the 'V' are too close together, past and future may accidentally map across each other with potentially confusing and detrimental results.

One client, a writer of self-help books, sought a consultation because she was overwhelmed by her work and personal responsibilities. A little investigation revealed the future was represented as a gigantic chute, funneling down towards her. Instead of her moving into the future, she experienced the future as an avalanche of demands and obligations coming towards her.

Another client reported she felt trapped by her past, and found herself "jumping up and down on the same spot", rather than moving forward. Her past was arranged as a high wall, completely enclosing her. She only had brief glimpses of the future when she jumped to see over the wall. (Not surprisingly, she remarked on several occasions that the demands of her job made her "nervous and jumpy").

Yet another client, a woman who spent six months of the year travelling in Asia buying exotic jewelry, became so disoriented whenever she returned to the West that she feared for her mental health. It emerged that she found it easy to switch to "Indian time"—slower and less demanding—but didn't realize she needed to readjust to a different timeline on her return. When she was schooled in the possibility of having two timelines, each serving a different purpose, her problems disappeared.

Finally, a friend known for driving his associates crazy by always getting distracted on the way to his appointments, visualizes his future timeline with numerous, exciting little side roads. Each time he sets out for a meeting, something catches and diverts his attention away from his plans.

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## EXERCISE 28: THE TIMELINE AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

### 1. Examine the organization of your timeline

Is it a Through Time or In Time timeline? Does it 'V' out before you? Does it have lots of side roads? Simply look at it without making any effort to change it.

### 2. Ask yourself the following question:

"If my timeline were real rather than visualized, how would it be responsible for, or affect, my problems, and the way I currently feel about my life?"

Think specifically about the degree of success you've experienced in reaching goals, keeping appointments, moving beyond your past negative experiences and forward into the future.

### 3. Notice whether your timeline functions as a metaphor to keep you stuck in your problem state.

When visualizing your past and future timeline. Use the following questions to analyze your status:

- Are you blocked, walled in or trapped?
- Are you unable to see a future, e.g.: your timeline after a certain point seems to disappear in a fog?
- Do you find you can't break free from the past?
- Do you have a habit of putting things off? (Are your plans situated *on* your timeline, or are they floating freely about in space?)

- Are you short of time or running out of time in relation to your life goals, hopes and dreams?
- How is your life in relation to your use of time? Are you losing, saving, wasting or spending time?

4. How do you know this is the case?

Notice how your own personal timeline construct makes this a reality for you.

Since timelines are personal constructs, it follows that you can organize and reorganize them whichever way you like. You can have more than one timeline (each perhaps serving a different purpose), and you can amend them if they stop serving their original purpose.

Many people whose timelines follow the *Through Time* model benefit by simply repositioning their timeline so that it passes through their body. Metaphorically speaking, they step back into their life, taking control in situations they previously felt were somehow beyond their reach.

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## **TIMELINES AND TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES**

Since obsessive thinking, overwhelming memories, a troubled childhood may, in fact, be playing and replaying like a subliminal movie inside your unconscious visual field, it makes sense to move the past timeline behind you—at an angle, rather than directly behind your head, so that it is outside of even your peripheral vision, but is still positioned so that you can look back at your past, for all the memories, lessons and experiences that comprise your life so far.

The following exercise places problems and negative experiences where they no longer influence you unconsciously and opens up your future, your personal domain of infinite possibilities.

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## **EXERCISE 29: CREATING A PROBLEM SOLVING-PATTERN**

1. If your timeline seems to pass outside your body, imagine drawing it towards you until you are fully inside your timeline.

Hear it click into place once you're standing inside it.

2. Grab your past timeline at the very beginning and swing it around.

People who recover quickly from setbacks and who follow all the principles of Being Happy often advise friends who are dealing with problems to "just put it behind you and move on". This lets us know that they intuitively put their past experiences behind them, signaling to their unconscious mind that the problem is over and done with. So, swing your past timeline around, either to the right or the left, until it is positioned at an angle midway between the back of your head at the edge of one shoulder.

Rest assured, everything you have learned, all your memories and all your experiences, remain in the correct order. Simply, the entire collection of experiences that make up your past has moved out of your immediate attention, and back into the past where they belong.

3. Lock or tie your past timeline into its new position by whatever means seems appropriate.

This is so your unconscious knows that your timeline does not need to wander back to its original position out of sheer habit.

4. Turn your attention to your future pathway; if necessary swing that path around until it opens up directly in front of you. Stretch, extend or build upon it until it disappears over the horizon.

This communicates to your unconscious in a language it understands that you have a long life ahead of you.

5. Now widen your future timeline so you have plenty of room for everything that the future has to hold.

Once you have done this, your unconscious will begin to understand that you have the potential for more options, opportunities, choices and adventures.

6. Now turn on the lights.

People who naturally put the past behind them often also talk about having a “bright future”. When prompted, it emerges that this is precisely how they code in the future—as if it is light and bright and hugely appealing.

Visualize your entire future pathway bathed in bright and attractive light, making the colors intense and vibrant. Think of it like a memorable vacation, full of sunlight, making it as bright as possible. See this as welcoming, exciting and happy. Your unconscious naturally moves away from darkness and towards light.

7. Test this pattern to see whether it suits all aspects of your personality.

Do this by going inside and literally asking of your inner self whether it is agreeable to proceeding with this construct in place. If it feels right, carry on to the next stage. If there seems to be any hesitation or objection, reassure the part concerned and request it to try the new pattern out for a reasonable period of time to establish whether this is a useful development or not. Explain that you can return your coding to its original pattern, or find a new and better pattern, if that turns out to be preferable.

8. Pause here and consider the problem you identified in the exercise that precedes this and ask yourself:

“If I were able to look back to a time when I had already resolved the problem that was bothering me, what would be different and better now?”

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You will find the above exercise extremely useful in applying the future and solution-oriented principles and techniques presented in this book. You will also discover its power in resolving specific problems that may be standing in your way. Many practitioners have found their effectiveness increases when they resolve problems within the time period in which they originally occurred, rather than trying to work entirely in the present, hoping that their work generalizes out into both past and future. The magic of the human mind allows us to move through time and space in any direction we choose. Mastering this process is essential in the art of Being Happy.

## **BACK TO THE FUTURE**

The following pattern is simple, powerful and adaptable to many different situations. One impromptu demonstration occurred at a London airport where a tour organizer reported that three members of his party had just told him they suffered from air sickness. After running the pattern described below, all three passengers were not only free of any problems on the outbound flight, but seemed to have forgotten that they'd ever had the problem when they returned.

The pattern is based on three main temporal shifts executed in a specific order:

- a) The problem is moved into the past;
- b) A new resource is located in the future;
- c) That resource is brought back and anchored in the present.



### **EXERCISE 30: THE BACK TO THE FUTURE PATTERN**

1. Think of a problem to which you have not yet been able to find a solution.

For the moment, move it behind you on to your past timeline.

2. Turn your attention to the future, and imagine you can see yourself (dissociated) moving forward to a time where a solution to the problem lies.

The travelers suffering from airsickness imagined seeing themselves in a time where a cure had been found and successfully administered.

3. Visualize yourself in as much detail as possible using the new resource.

Pay particular attention to how you will be behaving and speaking. Make this as vivid as possible.

4. When you are happy with the new, resourceful response, float into the future and down into the future you who is already enjoying the benefits of the change.

See through the eyes and hear with the ears of that future and, most importantly, feel how the new state expresses itself, both in your internal kinesthetic (how you feel inside), as well as how you move.

5. Float up and begin to move back in time, from your future self into the present, bringing your future resources with you.

Drop down into your body in the present and allow your new resources to settle in before completing the final step.

6. Staying where you are in the present, visualize yourself moving into your future and enjoying all the benefits of your new feelings, behavior and responses.

Do this beginning from your present and carry it all the way along your future timeline until you disappear over the horizon. Then see yourself floating up above your future timeline and back, bringing with you all your future experiences into the present. Float down into your present body and allow all this to consolidate. Repeat this several time, each time building on the previous pass until you feel confident that this pattern is now part of your physical and emotional repertoire.

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Notice how the exercises in this book are less concerned with why a particular problem arises than on how the problem is structured and manifests itself. We are seldom inclined to delve too deeply into anyone's past. However, part of your personal model may include the belief (not shared by the authors) that insight is a necessary prerequisite to healing; so, in order to leverage permanent change, there are instances when it might be useful to uncover a single sensitizing incident or a series of events that lead to a generalized, unwanted response.

The following technique has been developed to help you uncover the cause of a specific response when a single cause is suspected. Whether it is really the cause or not is irrelevant. Your belief is part of the structure of the problem. Therefore, by disassembling its structure, you can begin directly to affect the effects of holding this belief. It may also emerge that elements of the cause may suggest a particular approach you can use to change the way you are thinking, feeling and behaving right now.

**CAUTION:** In certain cases, the sudden eruption of past memories may cause retraumatization. You need to take appropriate steps to protect yourself. The first and most important step is to take a few moments to relax. Go inside and ask your unconscious to protect you from any seriously negative material that may be buried in the past. Wait for a specific response to manifest. Often this occurs in the form of an internal shift or feeling letting you know that your unconscious will respond appropriately.

The second precaution is to ensure that you have access to an appropriately trained professional should you require extra assistance. Remember: if your unconscious has repressed certain

information, it may have done so for good reason. It is our belief that the unconscious always acts protectively. This may include giving you amnesia for certain events.

Eliciting and respecting the protective nature of your unconscious can have fascinating consequences that reveal the creative nature of your inner processing. A woman who consulted us told how, as a troubled 12-year-old, she had hidden a valuable piece of jewelry somewhere in the family home which was now due to be sold. She was keen to remember where the piece had been hidden, but was anxious at the prospect of returning to the traumatic events of when it had happened. On the day she hid the jewelry her mother had been taken away amid massive upheaval to be hospitalized with a serious, long-term mental illness.

After drawing a detailed floor plan of the three-storey house, she was invited to close her eyes and given the following instruction:

“You find it comfortable and easy to return to that day, to do whatever you need to do in order to complete your task—but not until your unconscious has agreed to protect you from trauma, fear, sadness, or any other negative experience. Do you agree to this?”

The woman nodded and proceeded to imagine opening the front door of the family home to go inside. To her surprise, the ground floor was in total darkness. Since she knew the place intimately, she was able to make her way through the darkness and up several flights of stairs. The higher she climbed, the lighter her surroundings became, until she was brought to a halt near the very top of the house. There she remembered tucking the necklace under the edge of the stair carpet. She then made her way downstairs, out the front door and home.

The fact that she was able to remember where she had hidden something thirty years before is almost incidental to the extraordinary fact that her unconscious adopted a particularly creative way of obscuring any of the disturbing events that had taken place in the house on that day.

The following exercise helps us locate the cause or sensitizing incident(s) that may be involved in any problems you might have:

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## **EXERCISE 31: THE SECRET OF THE PRESENTING PAST**

1. Focus for the moment on the issue that has been causing you problems and that you suspect has some origins somewhere in your personal history.

Rather than spending time on reviewing the details, simply pay attention to how the feeling, that is your kinesthetic reaction, manifests in your body.

2. Anchor that feeling by pressing firmly on a knuckle of one hand.

3. Invite your unconscious to follow the feeling back in time.

Still holding the anchor, ride this sensation back until you arrive at a point some time in your past. Pay attention to any fleeting images that may occur.

4. When you reach the point of the suspected sensitizing incident, release your anchor and inquire of your unconscious whether this is the significant event.

You should experience a brief surge of the original feelings you had (or maybe another distinctive kinesthetic shift) as confirmation. If there is no response, repeat the process as required.

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## **FREEING AND HEALING YOURSELF FROM YOUR PAST**

The principles and techniques of Being Happy can all be applied historically—that is, you can mentally move back in time to the point where the incident first arose and deal with it then in a way that prevents problems developing later.

Current research suggests that traumas develop when people perceive themselves as powerless coupled with an inability to protect themselves at the time the original event occurred. Aside from the emotional distress caused by flashbacks and other symptoms of trauma, this sense of helplessness can be highly toxic. If left unresolved, it has been associated in later life, with alcoholism, depression, substance abuse, attempted suicide, eating disorders, chronic heart and lung disease, cancer, stroke and liver disease, in addition to a host of other dysfunctions and diseases. [\(123\)](#)

The following exercise is particularly useful because it can both restore your sense of control, and help you view the original event from a different, more resourceful, perspective.

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### **EXERCISE 32: HEALING YOUR PAST**

1. Once again, visualize your timeline and float up above it.
2. Float back in time to the point where the original sensitizing event occurred (possibly revealed by the [previous exercise](#)).

Keeping enough of a distance to allow you to view the experience with a measure of equanimity, identify these two aspects:

1. Which resources or abilities were you lacking at the time that would have helped you deal differently with the event at the time?



2. What or how did you respond to the event? (e.g.: withdrawal, avoidance, anger, dissociation, etc).

3. Identify the purpose of your response above.

What did you hope to accomplish? In most situations, the behavior is intended to protect you, even though it may not have been particularly comfortable or effective at the time. Don't worry if you regret your response at this time. Accept that all symptoms and behaviors can be said to have a positive intention. You are simply analyzing and reviewing your actions and responses.

4. Float back to the present.

Notice how as an adult you have since developed (more of) the resource you lacked at an earlier stage. This will be something like the ability to share your problems, to speak up for yourself or to tell an abuser to stop.

5. Imagine you can convert this ability into a symbolic or metaphorical form; choose a color, light, shape, fireball etc.

Hurl it back down your past timeline to your younger self.

6. Moving faster than light, zip over your timeline, past the resource-symbol you're hurling toward your younger self and drop down into the body of that younger self.

7. Catch the resource.

8. Bring it into your body and notice the feeling it creates.

9. Spin the feeling created by this resource throughout your body, faster and faster.

Allow it to spread throughout your head, your chest, stomach and pelvis, into your arms, legs, fingers and toes. Let it continue to expand until it extends a few inches outside your body, completely enclosing you in a protective, spinning cocoon, or force field, impenetrable and strong.

10. Next, rapidly move up along your timeline, through all your past experiences toward your present, still spinning the feeling and with a sense of complete safety.

As you do so, invite other incidents that otherwise would have hurt or frightened you from your past to come at you like missiles. Feel them smacking into your protective shield and bouncing off and into the past where they belong.

11. As you move back into your present self, see yourself rocketing into the future.

Noticing how the creation of a protective shield allows you to develop and explore more appropriate protective behavior, resolving previously threatening situations with confidence and ease. Repeat several times from [Step 9](#) above.

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BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, tidy up any problems from your personal history that continue to cause strife or issues for you today. Take your time and feel completely comfortable. Once you are comfortable, begin reading the next chapter.

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## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: GETTING FROM WHERE YOU ARE TO WHERE YOU WANT TO BE**

In this chapter:

- The secret of getting—and staying—on track;
- What is right with goal-setting—and what is wrong with it;
- How to eat an elephant;
- Your 20/20 foresight machine.

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Getting from where you are to where you want to be is more than a matter of wishful thinking. Two factors influence your success: direction and planning. Both represent essential components of long-term, consistent and most importantly, *predictable* change.

As stated previously, when you rehearse all the things that could go wrong, you are actually planning to fail. A portion of your brain functions similarly to the servo-mechanism on a smart missile. Like the missile, once you program your brain with instructions it will streak off in that direction until it hits its target—even if that target is disappointment and pain.

Achieving your dreams and aspirations, enjoying positive moods, health and well-being on an on-going basis requires planning. If you want to have success, you must be precise about what you want and how you will achieve it.

Most business seminars and self-help books offer various forms of 'smart' planning and goal-setting. Each suggests that any important actions should be positively stated, within the control of the person doing the planning, realistic, manageable and above all to have the ability to be accomplished within a specified time frame. However, while simple, goal-setting has its place when dealing with a certain class of tasks, without an overall orientation or direction, you are still at risk of running aground on the rocks of chance and circumstance.

## **THE JOURNEY KNOWN AS YOUR LIFE**

The majority of new cars produced today come equipped with a GPS (Global Positioning System). Millions of drivers around the world depend almost entirely on satellite navigation to get to where they want to go. The average GPS requires the driver to program in a location (your goal), choose from a series of directional options (shortest route, least traffic etc), and begin the journey. Should you ignore the device's instructions or accidentally make a wrong turn, it rapidly calculates the steps you need to take in order to come back on track. Supposing the data it receives is accurately processed, and excluding unforeseen circumstances, the system will deliver exactly what it promises.

Gone are the days (for some people at least) where you sat around the table with a big foldout map, holding lively discussions with other members of your family as to the best route for your vacation. Of course planning remains an essential component. What needs to be packed? Will you put a picnic basket in the trunk? What time should you leave in order to avoid the worst of the traffic? Above all, what are you going to do when you get there? How many different ways are you expecting to have fun?

## **WHAT IS RIGHT WITH GOAL-SETTING**

Some people (as well as companies) have no idea what they want or where going. Even where goal-setting is an important part of a corporate or personal culture, goals often don't connect with the culture or purpose in a meaningful way that ensures and maintains forward movement.

Goals can and do work. Of that there's no doubt. We have a built in ability to keep to certain simple objectives by priming the brain's Reticular Activating System (RAS) with words and images that prompt it to direct both our conscious and unconscious attention towards achieving a specified end. Neuroscience demonstrates that the creation of a highly detailed and emotionally charged outcome sets up a dynamic tension that can move someone from a present state to the desired state. All the techniques created in the wake of NLP are designed to accomplish just this. However, the outcome alone is not enough to maintain the momentum needed to enjoy a prosperous, happy and healthy life. We require something more.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH GOAL-SETTING**

Today's obsession with hitting targets and reaching goals quickly may make you successful in certain limited areas of your life, but a focus strictly upon benchmarks is equally likely to leave you feeling dissatisfied and unfulfilled. This is due to several pitfalls associated with conventional goal-setting. The first may be the sheer size of your objective, something we refer to as 'chunk-size'. Chunk size refers to those massive goals that become overwhelming at the mere thought of them.

Avoiding this is easy. Simply divide big goals into more manageable chunks. By doing this, you ensure that even the most challenging outcome becomes something you can handle. Consider the wisdom of this child's joke:

Q. How do you eat an elephant?

A. One bite at a time.

The next most common complaint is usually written off as the result of not enough will-power. Think of all the New Year's Resolutions you made every January 1. How many of them have you

achieved? How much do you look forward to next New Year so you can make even more resolutions that you won't keep?

Admit it. Chances are all those changes you were going to make, to quit smoking, lose a few pounds, stop biting your nails, simply never got off the ground. How much frustration (or, possibly, relief) did you feel when you abandoned your plans on day three or four? Possibly, you have given up even trying. As someone remarked, the best place to find parking is outside a health club in February.

If this has happened to you, there's a strong likelihood that your goals are not linked with a program to create change. Also, many people are driven by a particularly appealing outcome, then, on achieving it, seem to hit a brick wall, simply because the program they've set up doesn't extend beyond a specific end-point and they revert to where they started.

Jack is a talented businessman who made as many millions as he lost before he realized that something was wrong. In the course of conversation, he mentioned growing up in a poor family on the wrong side of the tracks. Every night he dreamt of breaking free from the grinding poverty that imprisoned both him and his family. His nightly promise to himself was, "One day I'll make a million dollars".

Later, he found he had a talent for buying and selling, and started his own company serving a relatively underexploited niche in the market. He made his million and then promptly lost it. He made it again...and lost it again. When he finally realized he needed to change something about his strategy, he realized with a shock that he had no plans beyond making his first million. His unconscious, lacking any further instructions, abandoned the program and simply started again.

This oscillation between present state and desired state is more common than may at first appear. How many times have you made a firm resolution to quit eating chocolate or buying a pack of cigarettes and been successful...for a while. As satirist Mark Twain remarked, "Giving up smoking is easy. I've done it dozens of times."

The simple reason for this is that the outcome has been represented as an accomplished fact. It isn't followed by the process of living with the successful outcome. Sure, you quit smoking, or put down that cream cake, or made a million. The deal is done. Now what? In the absence of any other instructions, your brain may revert to the only instructions it knows. In order to move you forward, therefore, goals and outcomes need to be part of an overall process of forward movement. Things do not stay the same. If you're not moving forward, they get worse.

## GOALS AND SELF-IMAGE

Another potential hazard rears its head when you regard yourself as successful only in terms of the goals you achieve. This, too, is more common than you might think.

Suppose you set a goal of making \$200,000 a year. “When I do that,” you tell yourself, “I’ll be a success.”

This kind of planning tells you where you want to go, but it also gives you a way of measuring how far away you are. This is a bad idea. Each day that passes before you actually reach your target is unconsciously registered as a failure.

How do you avoid that?

The answer is: *direction*.

Direction encompasses a number of qualities, including passion, vision and values. Direction is about where your life is going and what you are experiencing throughout the process of achieving various goals along the way. Therefore, direction is the journey. Goals represent the stepping stones allowing you to stay on track.

Let’s return to the goal of making \$200,000 or more a year. In establishing your goal, the direction you choose must allow you to know what you’ll enjoy while accomplishing your end. You’ll want time for family and friends; you’ll need to wake up each morning with a sense of excitement, curiosity and challenge. On a very real level, having direction in your life means the journey is more important than the destination. This applies to your business as well as your personal life. Many amazing relationships get lost because couples focus on building the life they want, rather than valuing and enjoying the life that they have together.

Human beings need somewhere to go, yet we flourish when we have options and choices. A life fully directed is multi-faceted, like a well-cut gem. In contrast, an entirely goal-driven life loses its color and energy, becoming nothing more than a series of successes or failures. Without something to move on to after you’ve accomplished a particular goal, you’re likely to come to a halt.

Revisiting the GPS analogy, you need to invest in a high-end device if you want to get the best results. Let us say that with the GPS you want more than simply to traverse the country by the fastest route. You actually want to enjoy the ride. Therefore, you need engaging company in the car; something to eat and drink and interesting activities and sights along the way. If you simply go to your destination and back in the shortest possible time, it is not a vacation. It is an ordeal.

By planning a life of Being Happy, you distinguish between goals and directions. When you set a direction, you include room for options, choices, possibilities and adventures. Pay attention to all the details and nothing, including you, will get lost along the way.

## **SETTING A DIRECTION**

A direction, like a puppy, is for life. Literally it is a route you set up to ensure you prevent your life drifting aimlessly, that sense that you are not really responsible for what happens to you. People suffering this kind of life drift usually feel disempowered and depressed. Sometimes they kick back by making yet another resolution, but failure to keep it results in an even greater sense of drift.

By setting a direction with care and precision, you reconnect with your potential. You disregard minor failures along the way and claim the power to keep adjusting your behavior to maximize good feelings, health and well-being. This is behavioral flexibility. It is a cornerstone of good NLP practice and should be included in everything you do.

Losing X number of pounds is a goal many have accomplished relatively easily, only to have the weight pile on even faster than before. However, eating good food in moderate amounts, adopting a healthier exercise regime, choosing to include treats that make you feel good without damaging your health and well-being, will result in you being slimmer and fitter most of the time. Since living healthily is a direction, not a goal, if you slip off the wagon, it is not the end of the world. Rather it is simply part of the orientation and reorientation that living a life with direction involves. This is how you make it work.

Goals and direction function together. Each goal leads on to the next, representing points along the continuum of your life's direction. Goals should be divided into smaller, measurable chunks so that each day can be marked by success. In fact, each morning should begin with the question,

“What can I do today that will keep me moving in the right direction?”



It should come as no surprise that your life's direction will be intimately related to your life mission. The presence of both, life direction and life mission defines an individual living a coherent and continuously fulfilling life.

## **YOUR FUTURE SELF**

Recent research confirms that the most effective planning comes from connecting with your "future self".

Stanford researcher Hal Ersner-Herschfield created a virtual reality computer program that allowed each subject to experience him or herself many years into the future, complete with wrinkles, grey hair, significantly aged body and so on. For a given period of time, each subject lived as their future selves and then came back into the present, alongside a control group that had not time-travelled. Both groups were given the task to decide how they would spend a \$1,000 windfall.

While the control group happily spent the money on gifts, parties and other items of short-term pleasure, those with an elderly avatar were far more likely to invest the money in a retirement plan. (124) This supports what we have believed for many years—that most bad decisions are made because people do not take the time to think a thought all the way through, to examine the consequences of their actions, or to explore alternatives. People get stuck because they have no next-step function. Major problems are reduced to a simple label. The process and its component parts are ignored so your life comes to a grinding halt.

Of course, you do not need a computer-driven virtual reality device in order to establish your life-direction. You already own the most advanced machine for exploring past, present and future in exquisite detail, your brain. Using the exercise below, you can investigate both the result of your present actions and the likely outcome of newer and more desirable behaviors while sitting in the comfort of your favorite armchair.

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## **EXERCISE 33: BOOTING UP YOUR 20/20 FORESIGHT MACHINE**

### **PART A: PREVIEWING THE RESULTS OF PRESENT UNWANTED BEHAVIOR**

1. Sit back and take three deep breaths, letting each out with a long, satisfying sigh.

Close your eyes and allow your attention to move inside and down. As you do, notice the black, undulating field that shows up behind your eyelids. This is what remote viewers call “dark solution”, the gateway to a field of possibilities beyond the reach of our normal, waking senses.

2. Choose one behavior you would like to change—smoking for example, binge-eating or reckless spending.

Imagine you can press a fast-forward button that jumps you to the final year of your life. Have the sensation of zooming forward in time, as if through a tunnel. Step into that body; feel what it is like to move with all the demands you have made of it; breathe with the lungs you have created; feel what it is like to live in a state of scarcity—physical, emotional or financial. Ask yourself whether you would have done anything differently if you had known back then what you know now. Spend some time honestly exploring the life you have created for yourself.

3. Take a snapshot of your limited world and placing it in the back of your mind, return to the present.

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## **PART B: PREVIEWING THE RESULTS OF A LIFE LIVED WITH DIRECTION**

1. Pause for a moment and ask yourself the following questions:

How would I like my life to be instead of the way I experienced it in the earlier part of the exercise? What would I be doing that is different and better?

2. Press your fast-forward button and move quickly to the later years of your life with these qualities in place.

Notice what you are doing and how you are feeling. Experience in all senses the quality of the life you have created this time, the life you would have preferred.

3. Return to the present, moving in reverse through a series of steps.

Notice as you move *backwards* through each stage of your future life what actions were needed in order for the previous step to have been possible. For example, if part of your desired life is financial security, imagine drawing from a flourishing bank account each month, then making regular payments into it etc. If you want to be a certain weight, ignore the scales. Rather, see yourself walking to the shops instead of taking the car, or planning healthy, delicious meals. Make sure each stage involves something you enjoy. At each stage ask yourself, "What needed to happen in order to make this step possible?"

4. By the time you return to the present, you should have a series of slides, stills or short movie clips illustrating each stage of your journey.

5. Splice together these clips to make a smooth, feature-filled movie of your new, direction-oriented life.

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## PART C: MAKING THE SWITCH

1. At this stage, you have a choice between returning to the old pattern (stored in the back of your mind), or stepping into the new one.

Decide finally whether you want to make the switch, Commit to everything that is required for your new lifestyle to work.

2. Extract the old, undesired future snapshot from the back of your mind.

Put this image in your internal visual field directly before you. Place the opening scene of the fully representational, desirable movie of your new way of living behind you.

3. Now, very quickly, move the picture in front of you around, either to the right of left, until it is behind you, while simultaneously pushing the new image through your body from back to front.

*Whoosh!* Do this several times, cranking up the [kinesthetic](#) (the body-sensation) as the desired image moves through you, and ends up in front of you.

4. Step into the new image and imagine moving very rapidly through each stage leading you to a healthy, happy and prosperous old age.

Know that with each step forward, the old pattern moves further away behind you. But, should you stop or regress, the old pattern will advance on you ... *so keep moving.*

5. Repeat [Step 4](#) several times until you feel comfortable with all aspects that contribute to your new direction.

Remind yourself that this is a direction, and while there are a number of mini-goals along the way, they are simply guideposts. If something doesn't quite work out the way you want it to, make the necessary adjustment and continue. If you give way to over-eating or smoking, acknowledge your feeling of disappointment. Recognize it as a sign that your original decision to change was the correct one and get right back on the program.

6. Above all, remind yourself that living a direction-focused life is a process, not a goal.

Take time to enjoy the journey. How you are going is far more important than where you are getting to.

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## **TAPPING INTO EINSTEIN'S BRAIN**

Einstein's creative strategy has been thoroughly documented. His first step was to tap into his abilities to visualize extraordinary events, such as riding on a beam of light. By changing sub-modalities from the spoken or written word to the internal image, his mind experiments gave him a fresh perspective on a problem, and often as history well documents, delivered amazing results.

His process of directional focusing was almost entirely [kinesthetic](#). According to biographer JA Crowther, Einstein used "instinctive feeling" to orientate himself in the direction where he suspected a solution might lie. [\(125\)](#) Michael Faraday, the British chemist and physicist who contributed so much to the study of electromagnetism and electrochemistry, used similar gut feelings to direct his research, even when his instincts appeared contrary to the laws of electricity as they were understood at the time. [\(126\)](#)

In his book, *Synectics*, William JJ Gordon describes what he calls the "Hedonic Response" in two parts.

He writes of a strong, pleasurable feeling that develops as a successful period of problem-solving nears its end. This, he believes, signals the conceptual presence of a major new viewpoint. At the same time, minor pleasurable feelings occur along the way, acting as a moment-to-moment evaluation of the creative process itself. [\(127\)](#)

A similar process has been reported by Abraham Maslow, William Blake, Thomas Edison, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Henry David Thoreau. [\(128\)](#) The problem with these descriptions is that the authors and thinkers involved tended to leave the process to chance. Consider how many other Edisons, Einsteins and Thoreaus might have emerged if only they knew to employ this process. This is exactly what NLP delivers. NLP models allow us to create new techniques and

observe, analyze and refine other people's unconscious behavior so we can teach anyone how to do the same thing with excellence. For example, Einstein and his biographers provide enough clues for you to be able to incorporate part of his motivating strategy in your planning procedure.

People practicing the Being Happy process adapt, refine and apply this strategy consciously to motivate themselves, as well as to inform themselves that they remain on track to a successful conclusion of a project. As with all effective techniques, these people practice their newly acquired skills until they become second nature.

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#### **EXERCISE 34: THE EINSTEIN ENGINE**

1. Go to [Step 4 in Part C](#) of the exercise above.

Before you begin to move into the future, pause to remember in as much detail as you can a time when you felt significantly motivated to push forward with a particular project. It can be in any context in your life, from buying an item of clothing that you absolutely had to have to making love. The important thing is that you knew once you began you could not stop.

2. As you vividly remember what you saw, heard and felt, notice where the feeling that drives you forward begins in your body.

Notice the direction it is moving and where it seems to dissipate.

3. Rather than allowing this drive to fade away, connect its endpoint to its beginning.

Loop and spin it so that the feeling starts to intensify.

4. As the feeling grows stronger, move into your constructed future, mini-goal by mini-goal.

Continue to intensify the spinning feeling. Time this escalation so that it builds in sync with each step of your project until you reach your planned outcome.

5. To ensure that you are not brought up short by an endpoint to your plans, stop where you are.

Roll the spinning feeling along your timeline into your future until it disappears over the horizon.

6. Repeat this exercise several times.

Test to make sure that when you think about taking the first step in the direction you have chosen you feel excitement automatically beginning to build. If it does not, repeat the exercise until it does.

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Most planning methods, including NLP in its earliest incarnation, regard feedback as the Holy Grail of self-development. This is valid enough when a chain of events has already been set in motion. It is extremely empowering to reframe mistakes as feedback and simply adjust your behavior to compensate. 'Catching the wave' is a phrase we often heard to describe this process.

Our hope in writing this book is to help the reader get ahead of the wave, to think of and plan for what happens *after* what happens next. To do this you need to develop two skills:

- 1) To include feed-forward loops as a regular part of your planning,
- 2) To set up a sensitive early-warning system that can respond to changes within or about your immediate environment before they start causing trouble.

The ideal continuum is dynamic, incorporating feedback while propelling you forward in ways that allow you to deal effectively with what has already happened and what is likely to happen next.

Contingency planning, often seen in highly effective managers, doctors and nurses, requires you anticipate problems and act swiftly, if necessary, adjusting the steps towards your outcome and, sometimes, the outcome itself. [\(129\)](#) [\(130\)](#)

Kenneth and his family were plunged into a terrifying five-hour ordeal when he and his family returned home and disturbed a gang of violent thieves who had broken in to their home after drugging their dogs and disabling the burglar alarm. Ken and his family stayed alive and relatively unhurt by remaining calm and co-operating with the robbers, even though they were subjected to extreme psychological and physical pressure.

Afterwards, Ken blamed himself remarking, “If only I’d realized the dogs weren’t barking, I’d have been suspicious and not put myself and my family in such danger.”

His remark indicates that he *was* aware the dogs were not giving his family the usual noisy welcome. He unconsciously dismissed the information as irrelevant, to his and his loved ones’ cost.

“If only I’d noticed ...” is a refrain often heard by police officers investigating a rape or mugging, or by a therapist listening to the experiences of a trauma victim.

The suspicious behavior of a stranger waiting for an elevator, or an unexplained change in a familiar chain of events, is often screened out of your conscious awareness. The following exercise is designed to make this information consciously available—that is, to heighten your sensory acuity, so that you can choose whether to respond or not.

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## **EXERCISE 35: INSTALLING AN EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM**



1. Find three situations from your own experience where you failed to notice something that would have saved you from the trouble that followed.

These may be major crises like Ken's experience above, or fairly minor ones, such as spilling a glass of milk because you failed to notice your sleeve touching it as you reached for something else. Make your recollections as vivid as possible in all sensory systems.

2. Rewind each situation to a point shortly before the incident occurred.

Slowly run each scenario forward and insert an alarm that is impossible to ignore, for example a vivid, flashing, amber light accompanied by a shrill alarm.

3. Run a series of imaginary events in which such an early-warning system would prove useful.

Make sure in your virtual scenarios that you pause when the second the alarm goes off to explore the situation and make a decision as to whether it is safe and appropriate to proceed, or not.

**Note:** When your early-warning alarm goes off in real-time, it's important that you always stop and investigate. If you override it, your unconscious is likely to revert to its old pattern of screening out all but the strongest signals.

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### **TIPS SUPPORTING YOUR NEW SUCCESS-ORIENTED DIRECTION:**

The success of all goals and life-directions should be measured by internal, rather than external, references. Just as holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl found peace in unimaginably terrible circumstances by uncovering and staying true to his own values, your planning success depends on staying true to yourself, rather than to other people's judgments, opinions and beliefs.

If you want to be slimmer and fitter, ditch your scales or the Body Mass Index (BMI) and start to pay attention to how much more comfortable you feel in nice clothes in a smaller size.

If you have quit smoking, stop projecting your mind into a future and begin to notice right now how much more easily you breathe, how much better your food tastes, or how more awake you feel.

Measure success by what is working, rather than by what you have yet to accomplish. Be kind to yourself if you hit a snag. Laugh at your humanness and simply get back on track.

Finally, take time to celebrate your achievements rather than your failures. Pause, reflect and feel. Remember, an important key to Being Happy is learning how *to be*, rather than simply what to do.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, refine your direction and the important steps or goals along the way. Make sure when you do this that you utilize all your senses—what you will be doing, feeling, seeing, saying and so on.

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## **RESOURCES AND FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

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## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR LIFE**

In this chapter:

- The secrets of highly effective and successful people;
- Imaginative engineering and achievement;
- Rehearsing what you want, not what you fear;
- How handicaps help you flourish.

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What do successful athletes, famous heart surgeons and concert pianists all have in common?

The answer, aside from the fact each has undergone intensive training in their field, is twofold: First, they all have a clear vision of what they want and where they want to be; secondly, they are committed to getting there.

Those who function at the upper edge of their capabilities have another tool at their disposal - even though some may not be consciously aware of it. They simply deploy it intuitively.

What is this magic tool? You have it too. To some degree or other, people performing at the level of excellence tap into their brain's ability to complement their physical practice through mental rehearsal, a practice sometimes known as, though not quite accurately, as visualization.

By running a scenario of what they want to do and how they plan to do it, from driving down the center of the green, repairing a hole in a heart or playing a concerto, each prepares himself or herself to perform at his or her very best. To these exceptional performers, the experience is

something they can see, hear, feel and sometimes even taste and smell before they begin. They are practicing something we could call imaginative engineering.

For years, mainstream researchers have shied away from the idea of exploring the mechanics of mental rehearsal, primarily because they were afraid they would be associated with many of the so-called fringe practitioners who made extravagant claims for visualization as the answer to all of life's ills and the route to most of its riches.

The problem is with the word. While many New Age gurus regarded visualization as a magic tool to create riches out of nothing, we in NLP saw it (or rather its mature and more accomplished brother, mental rehearsal) as a tool to condition thinking and optimize behavior.

## **WHAT MENTAL REHEARSAL REALLY IS**

Since the earliest days of NLP, a process called "future-pacing" was recognized as a key to locking into place the changes each technique initiated. Essentially it involved two steps:

1. Create a full sensory representation of the new process or behavior;
2. Associate into the representation and imagine carrying out Step 1 a number of times until the actions become second nature.

It is easy to see future-pacing as a simple form of conditioning. We know with certainty that measurable changes in both brain function and motor skills can be achieved almost as easily by repeatedly and vividly imagining an act as they are by actually carrying it out. [\(131\)](#) Brains are constantly making decisions about which response is the most appropriate in any situation. The strongest and most clearly defined will become the default pattern it chooses. Therefore, by mentally rehearsing a new behavior, you create a template. The more you reinforce it, the more dominant it becomes.

Many writers on the subject of creativity refer to the mechanical and electrical engineer, Nikola Tesla and his reported ability to visualize entire mechanical systems in such detail that he could set an imaginary machine running, and then return to it weeks or even months later to check which parts had suffered stress or undue wear. The story, of course, is impossible to verify, yet contains within it the seeds of a truth that 40 years of research and experience have shown us works. These truths we can learn systematically to exploit in the pursuit of Being Happy.

Mental rehearsal is an important and useful skill to develop. Not only can it improve mental and physical performance, but it can actually help you develop muscular dexterity and strength. [\(132\)](#)

### **WHAT MENTAL REHEARSAL IS NOT**

While being able to construct mental images is an important part of creating your future, mental rehearsal has nothing to do with the esoteric practices promising (in exchange for the price of a book, a DVD, a course of instruction) the secret to infinite riches—especially if you are not required to do anything other than invite the universe to meet your desires.

Natural optimists and those who have learned the technology of Being Happy understand that taking action is a key to their accomplishments. It is entirely possible to short-cut your way to success. Being able to imagine your goals and the route that will get you there is an important part. However, the process does not end there. Nor will any method that promises to bring you riches make you wealthy if you simply sit at home doing nothing other than visualizing. It will make one person wealthy: the guy who sold you the idea.

### **WHEN MENTAL REHEARSAL DOES NOT WORK**

Sometimes, mental rehearsal does not work. There are several reasons why, and all can be fixed. The most common objection we hear is, “I can’t make pictures in my mind.”

Of course, this is nonsense. If you were unable to create or remember visual images, you would be severely handicapped, unable, in all probability, to think or move. Everyone processes information visually; in fact, while we each have preferences in certain circumstance, [visual](#) input will always trump the other senses. We are incredibly adept at remembering pictures. As neuroscientist John Medina says, “Hear a piece of information and three days later you'll remember 10% of it. Add a picture and you'll remember 65%.”

Why is vision such a big deal to us? Perhaps because seeing is how our species has always detected major threats, food supplies and reproductive opportunities. [\(133\)](#)

If you believe you can't visualize, you are wrong. The misapprehension arises when people expect to be able to make pictures as clear and distinct as whatever they see in the outside world. This would be a mistake. Your internal imagery is seldom as vivid as your perception of the outside world—and that is the way it should be. If both internal and external pictures were equally clear and bright, there would be a strong chance that you would begin to muddle internally generated imagery with external reality. If your coding of inside and outside become confused, you risk experiencing the chaos and upheaval of schizophrenia.

Another possibility is that you may simply be unaware of the constant procession of visual images that actually exist, because both eidetic and constructed images can occur so rapidly that they flit past before they make their way into your conscious awareness. Most likely though your attention is simply elsewhere and the images slip through under your mental radar.

Just because you fail to register the pictures does not mean they are not affecting your life. Their very lack of clarity may be the source of discomfort. The explanation is simple and familiar. Often, it is not what you actually see in a horror film that scares you; it is what happens at the edge of your vision, something that suddenly jumps out at you. You are not sure what it is going to be and part of that's what makes people scream. You hear a loud noise and half the time nothing is actually there. Yet, you get scared and jump anyway, even if there is no reason for it.

Most people have phobias, such as a fear of flying. They do not have this phobia because they have a clear vision of what they fear. They simply do not know what is lurking at the edge of their experience, waiting to cause harm. They seldom think much about burning up in an airplane, but still have fears because it is unclear what is happening. When they clarify things, they become able to understand things differently and to make better decisions. For example, people are afraid of air turbulence because they do not realize it is the plane bouncing up, not down. Rather than falling, they are moving higher, away from the ground. A little detail like that that goes a long way toward calming a fear based on a lack of understanding.

Over several decades we have helped people to laugh at their fears; not because we want them to think that what they are thinking is stupid, but because we want them to laugh. The neural chemistry of laughter produces quality pictures, and, in the end, each person starts to think about things differently and more happily.

If the lack of detail in your pictures is a problem, we suggest spending a few minutes a day practicing your constructed images. The following exercise is an easy and effective way to tone your image-making muscles.



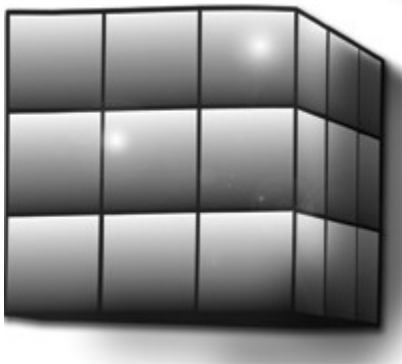
### **EXERCISE 36: SHARPENING UP YOUR VISUALIZATION SKILLS**

1. Imagine a cube made of white wood and painted a dark color—red or black—on its six faces.
2. Mentally cut the cube vertically in three equal slices, first in one direction, and then at right angles.

You will now have six rectangular pieces.

3. Cut these three pieces, this time horizontally, in three equal slices.

You now have 27 smaller cubes of equal size (see figure below). Some will have white faces; others will have different combinations of light and dark faces depending upon where they occur in the larger cube.



4. Having done that, take a few minutes every day to work your way through the cube in any direction you like.

Identify the position of each small cube and mentally establish how many white faces and how many dark it has.

5. When you become proficient at this, you can challenge yourself even further by slicing the cube four times in each direction.

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**TIP:** The fact that you even understood the steps of this exercise should confirm to you that you are able to create images. Were you not visualizing, the whole thing would have been gobbledygook.

## **FIXED STATE OR ONGOING BEHAVIOR?**

Another complaint we sometimes hear is that “future-pacing” doesn’t work. The person may have followed the steps of a chosen technique and then found the new behavior has failed to take.

In mentally rehearsing a new behavior or response, it is important that you decide whether this is an ongoing process, or, a fixed, irreversible new state. For example, if you plan to lose a certain number of pounds by dieting, you’re very likely to put them back on. However, if choose to follow a practical eating plan and exercise (an ongoing behavior), you will moderate your weight as a side-effect.

If you want the objective to be permanent, such as becoming a non-smoker, the outcome is fixed and irreversible. You just are, and that is it.

When you rehearse ongoing behaviors, you should be able to see that image dissociated, and feel drawn toward it. Something inside you goes, “This is what I want. This is the way I’ll be behaving”, then each day that follows you match that behavior. By doing so you will feel good



about what you're doing and be more motivated to continue. When you rehearse accomplished facts, you should associate into the experience so your neurons can say, "Okay, this is the way it is."

The reason you do not step inside your picture of a new, ongoing behavior and pretend you are already there is that this creates false confidence. **Confidence without competence is a dangerous delusion** to have. Some practitioners of NLP use a technique they call the "As-If Frame", in which they act as *if* they are already the person they want to be. We do not endorse this technique. Rather than delude yourself, we want you to aim at new ways of behaving. The difference in the two approaches is simple. Instead of thinking you are good at something, you actually *become* good at it.

## **ASSOCIATION VS DISSOCIATION**

Choosing between an associated or dissociated future-pace has a foundation in neurological fact. French neurologists used Positron Emission Tomography (also known as PET scanning), a diagnostic imaging modality, to study actions mentally simulated either with a first-person (associated) or a third-person (dissociated) perspective. He found that while both approaches were associated with common activation in certain areas of the brain, there were important differences.

For example, the dissociated perspective switches on areas of the brain involved in planning and executing motor movements, while the associated simulation activates areas dealing with action and feeling. [\(134\)](#)

We are spending some time on these specifics for an important reason.

At worst, visualization, affirmations and positive thinking may actually have a damaging effect. New Age therapists who suggest to people that they are ill because they had 'bad' thoughts should be regarded as criminals. Failure to think their way free of cancer or some other debilitating disease can increase patients' feelings of depression and guilt and profoundly exacerbate their condition.

At best, badly thought out and executed visualization (especially without an action plan) will be a waste of time. Books and courses on visualization often suggest imagining the event as if it has already happening. As we have already mentioned, this could be a serious mistake.

Experimenters found that students at the University of California who used the As If Frame to visualize getting a high grade in a forthcoming exam actually did worse than those who did not practice visualization. They studied less than their colleagues, suggesting that visualization led them to believe on an unconscious level that the exam had already been written and graded. [\(135\)](#)

In another highly significant experiment, young women at the University of Pennsylvania were told to visualize hooking up with a fellow student with whom they had a serious, but undisclosed, crush. The instructions were to imagine a richly detailed scenario in which the women revealed their feelings to, and entered into a passionate relationship with, the objects of their desire. This was rehearsed as if it was actually happening in the present tense.

Five months later, these subjects were found to be significantly less likely to have revealed their feelings to the person on whom they had a crush compared with a control group who were given a somewhat less positive scenario to visualize. [\(136\)](#) Similar negative results were found in a two-year follow-up study of students who visualized already having found their perfect jobs. [\(137\)](#)

What does this mean? Simply that you have highly specialized parts of the brain that decide whether something has already been accomplished (so you can stop trying) or, that you're adopting a new set of ongoing behaviors (that will continue into the future). Needless to say, getting it the wrong way around is likely to get you results very different from the ones you hoped for.

It is important to recognize that the responsibility for choosing the most useful and appropriate actions and behaviors to practice is yours. Do not rely on your unconscious to differentiate between desirable and undesirable processes and outcomes. Remember, any sufficiently vivid imagined activity will be regarded by at least part of the brain as real. This risk is ever-present. If you dwell on past mistakes or future problems you are actually embedding these negative patterns in your unconscious mind and possibly setting up a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **CASE STUDY: ANNA THE ACTRESS**

Anna, an actress complained that multiple problems, including insomnia, were destroying her life. She was able to recount in detail every slight and setback she had suffered since the age of five. Each one of these events, it seemed, was affecting the quality of her life today. Since the ability to

recall the minutiae of life so completely was clearly a skill that might have applications in some other, more appropriate context, we asked, “How do you know what’s causing your problems now?”

Her answer was simple and enlightening.

“Well, that’s what keeps me awake at night,” she related. “I go to bed and start thinking of all the things that have gone wrong in my life. My therapist tells me it’s important to have insight about where your problems come from, but I just can’t seem to find out why.”

We then asked her how often she created a plan to overcome her problems. How often did she look forward ways of doing and feeling better?

She responded sheepishly, “I always thought if I got to the bottom of my problems, I’d automatically start to feel better.”

It took some convincing before she could accept that all the therapists and books she had turned to had repeated the same piece of received ignorance without ever checking whether it was true. The past, we told her, does not necessarily dictate the future. How she was responding to the past was what needed to be addressed.

As an actress, she understood the importance of rehearsal. Once she recognized that she had a choice as to whether she rehearsed success or failure, peace and joy or anxiety and dysfunction, her recovery began almost immediately.

Later, she said, “It is so simple and so obvious—but in more than thirty years I’d never noticed I was practicing feeling bad every time I thought of either the past or the future.”

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## **THE POWER OF WORDS**

When Nobel laureate Eric Kandel demonstrated that *Aplysia*, a giant marine snail, could *learn* to fear both electric shocks and the *possibility* of electric shocks, neuroscience made a gigantic leap forward. Kandel became the first scientist to demonstrate something that is as true of snails and

other simple organisms as it is of primates, including human beings: *learning changes the structure of the neurons of the brain.*

Kandel refused to join the reductionists who believed that once neurons were wired together they were condemned to fire together for life. He went on to prove a presupposition that has driven NLP developers since the very beginning: you can actually reprogram your neurology by the systematic use of language. [\(138\)](#)

One thing is certain: regardless of what problems you might think you have, they are only problems as long as they cause you anxiety.

Of course, the word anxiety itself causes problems. Psychologists are divided about its precise definition, although they tend to agree that the various types of anxiety are bound together by a common theme of “excessive, irrational fear or apprehension”.

Most treatments tackle either the physical symptoms, or the so-called irrationality, of the condition. Drugs are prescribed in an attempt to damp down the palpitations, sweating or nausea; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on the other hand, puts you on full-time anti-terrorism alert by branding rogue thoughts as the cause of the problem.

These approaches miss the obvious. Anxiety is only anxiety when the thing you are frightened of has not yet happened. It is a problem that exists solely in the future. You are anxious about what might happen, and what could happen as a result of that, and so on, until you have created an entire sequence of terrible, but entirely imaginary events.

The moment what is feared happens (if it actually ever does), its nature changes. Now you might strongly dislike, and try to put an end to, what is happening, but you are no longer anxious about it. You have entered a state of flight or fight. How successfully you perceive your ability to fight or run away from the event (or, to resolve some other way) dictates how well or how badly you will cope.

If you have ever suffered a full-blown panic attack, you probably felt as if you were going to die. The reason for this is both simple and logical. Your fight and flight response evolved to keep you alive. If you are unable to fight or run away, the chances of being eaten by a predator escalates (or so the primitive part of your brain believes). The pictures you have created pile up, and the highly protective limbic system cranks up the message, “*Get out of here!*”

What really causes problems is not so much fear, but the *fear* of fear. If that is not quickly dealt with, it triggers an even more overwhelming tsunami of unpleasant neurobiological responses.

Anticipation is what made you anxious in the first place. The degree to which you become nervous or afraid is in direct proportion to the vividness with which you create a mental representation of the feared event. In other words, you visualize disaster, and the part of your brain that has difficulty in distinguishing between what's real and what's purely imaginary, simply does its job. It powers up your instinctual ability to fight or run away. If the problem is protracted and seems out of your control, chances are, like Anna, you've rehearsed it so many times, and in such exquisite detail, that it's become second nature.

Here is the question. If this ability is so powerful and can be used to such destructive effect, how come you (and most other people) fail to use the same ability to imagineer (imagine and engineer) to make things better?

The answer is simple:

- 1) You need to *want* to make things different and better;
- 2) You have to know *how* to act differently;
- 3) You must *commit* to acting differently from now on.

Of course, 'acting differently' means something specific here.

Most people who end up in therapy or in doctors' office complaining of 'self-sabotage' and 'low self-esteem' are, in fact, extremely good at the processes and principles described above. On a daily, often hourly basis, they mentally rehearse how they are going to feel and act; they repeat what they believe about themselves and their potential. They examine and amplify their visceral feelings to support these views and opinions. They are doing an excellent job of mental imaging, coupled with behavioral practice. Their strategies work perfectly. The only problem is: they are rehearsing and doing the very thing they fear most.

Remember the analogy of the brain as servo-mechanism, primed to lock on to a given target and track each twist and turn regardless of how and where that target tries to escape? At this level of cognitive processing, thoughts rarely fall into the categories of right or wrong, good or bad,

creative or destructive. The driving force behind the servo-mechanism is simple. It is locked onto its target and will pursue that target until the target is destroyed, no ifs or buts.

Neuroscience today fully supports our assertion of many decades: that it is possible to program the mind to act in new and more resourceful ways. The intention in developing NLP was never to create robots but to make it possible for every human to tap into their extraordinary ability to set and reset patterns of feeling and behavior in ways that could significantly increase the quality of their lives.

People are carrying out this programming all the time. Most of the time it is random and unrewarding. In some cases, it is actively damaging.

Like any new skill, trade or talent, you have to develop it in order to make the most of it. Once developed, you can take on new behaviors and more resourceful patterns of thinking. You will be able to master new skills, such as pain control and fearless achievement. The first step is to develop expertise in mental imagery so you can take on your new proficiency as part of your behavioral repertoire.

## **FUTURE PACING / MENTAL REHEARSAL**

Mental Rehearsal was put to the test in one study at Texas A and M. One group of medical students was taught to mentally practice venipuncture (insertion of a needle into a vein in order to withdraw blood for analysis or to start an intravenous drip). These students performed the actual procedure dramatically better after just 30 minutes of mental rehearsal than their fellow students who simply followed normal training methods. [\(139\)](#)

This skill, mental rehearsal is frequently encountered among highly skilled innovators and performers in many different fields. The late Dr Christiaan Barnard, the South African heart transplant pioneer, once said, "Before I ever had a patient in front of me, I'd done the operation thousands of times. Some of those times were to decide the best way to proceed, but when I'd made up my mind about that, it was all about practice. I practiced it day and night. It was there when I went to sleep and in my dreams and when I woke up again. I was completely familiar with the procedure before I even walked into the OR." [\(140\)](#)

## **MENTAL-REHEARSAL GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines are modeled on the processes of Christiaan Barnard and a wide range of other elite performers and will help you to get the most from this skill.

- While you are learning to hone your mental rehearsal skills, eliminate as many distractions as possible. Make yourself comfortable and take your time. Before long, mental rehearsal will become a skill you can use at short notice, anywhere.
- Decide whether you are rehearsing a new, ongoing behavior, or a finite response or skill you wish to lock in place.
- Take a series of long, slow breaths, making sure the exhalation is slightly longer than the inhalation.
- Relax, scanning your body and gently releasing all muscular tension.
- Create a dissociated movie of yourself using the new behavior.

Be systematic during this process. Approach it as if you are scripting, directing, filming and editing a movie. Snip unwanted scenes and replace them with more desirable sequences until you have a detailed movie with which you are completely satisfied. Do not make it very vivid yet. That comes in the next few steps.

### **A NEW BEHAVIOR / RESPONSE:**

If this is a new, finite response or skill you wish to make permanent, step into the movie and run it in real time from an associated point of view. Do this several times, increasing the vividness of all the qualities of your movie each time you make a pass. Pay special attention to the feelings ([kinesthetics](#)) of the experience. Anchor your response until you are confident that you will be able to re-experience all aspects of your new skill or behavior at will. Spend a few minutes every night as you are drifting off to sleep, stepping into and running your movie.

## **ONGOING BEHAVIOR:**

If this is an ongoing behavior you are installing, follow all the steps above. Then, rather than remaining in the scenario, step back out of the frame until you can see yourself in the movie on your future timeline, a few steps in front of you.

- Make everything as vivid and compelling as possible. As you watch yourself in the movie, feel a strong pull as if you are drawing back the string of a powerful crossbow. Know that any action you take with the intention of using your new process will release that bowstring and precipitate you like an arrow in your chosen direction.

## **MAKING IT DIFFERENT AND BETTER**

Despite the successes recorded with future-pacing, we have always been curious as to why some people achieve the majority of their aspirations yet still fall a little short of their target. This prompted a closer study of brain function as well as additional experimentation. Our objective was to identify additional tactics that could amplify the effects of mental imagery. The rest of this chapter introduces these advanced techniques—critically important to those readers who wish to take their skills to a new level.

Many people we know lack the drive to solve their own problems. They have little vision, and are content to live their lives at the mercy of other people and external events.

This information is for the rest—for those who want to optimize every aspect of their lives, and who also understand that to gain anything of any value requires an investment, of time, planning and determination to follow through. If you really want to create a life worth living, the future you are moving into needs to be bigger, brighter, more colorful... and very different from the way you have been thinking about it before.

Before go any further, try this little experiment.

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### EXERCISE 37: NATURE'S BEAUTY

1) Think of a particularly beautiful scene—a sunset, the sky at night, a field full of flowers blowing gently in the breeze?

2) Examine your mental image closely.

3) How different was your image from the usual picture postcard view of a pleasant scene?

Was the sun you were watching sink below the horizon viewed from a distant planet? Did you find yourself wheeling through infinite space, past planets and in and out of different dimensions, as you viewed the night sky? Were the flowers in the field in your imagination species you had never seen before? Were their colors in the leaves and the green chlorophyll in their petals? Or, were you seeing a bog-standard pretty view that you could find in any tourist brochure or screen-saving program? [\(141\)](#)

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The point of the above exercise is to demonstrate the no matter how vivid your imagination might be, this kind of thinking does little to change the architecture of your brain. In fact, the very difficulty you might experience in trying to visualize new takes on any of the examples above is evidence that the brain, when it functions efficiently, downgrades creativity and imagination in favor of the familiar. An efficient brain works economically, with minimal use of energy and maximum reliance on what it already knows. An effective, thinking brain, on the other hand, is fit for purpose. That is, it accomplishes precisely whatever you set out to do. That requires thinking and living by design.

We know that in order to accelerate physical performance, we need to stress the body and give it time to adapt. Athletes in training routinely take on handicaps, such as ankle-weights or training sessions at higher altitudes, in order to force this process of adaptation. Then, when their handicap is removed, their performance makes a quantum leap to a higher, level. The shift, both physical and in conscious awareness, is profound and sometimes life-changing.

This process works mentally as well.

A gifted young tennis player came in for a motivational session a few weeks before her Wimbledon debut. She and her coach explained that everything about her game was exemplary—except for her speed. Even though she was extremely fit, she needed to increase her speed if she was to make the most of this opportunity.

Mental imagery was included in her program leading up to the tournament. She played game after game, ensuring that every stroke was perfect. She had power, focus and endurance. Then she added the following dimension to her mental game.

“I imagine that I’m playing on the slopes of a volcano just after an eruption. Hot lava is about to swallow me up, so I have to keep moving. I have to move faster than I’ve ever moved before while still watching the ball ... “

Within a very short time, observers, including her coach, noticed a marked increase in her speed. Her playing style was also noticeably different. Even though she appeared to others to be powering her way through her opponents’ games, she remained calm and mentally relaxed.

“The strange thing,” she said later, “is that everything around me seems to slow down. I don’t really have a strong feeling that I’m speeding up. But, sometimes I react to something that I haven’t even noticed consciously. The game seems to be playing me, rather than the other way around.”

### **CASE STUDY: THE BANNISTER EFFECT**

Roger Bannister only broke the four-minute mile record after his coach refused to give him any feedback about his performance. Bannister began training himself, pushing hard against the barrier of the widespread belief that breaking the record was impossible. Later, in describing the process, he unconsciously revealed part of the strategy we have been making explicit.

All sporting events are more mental than physical, he said. Physical training could be arduous, sometimes extending over years, laying down the patterns of the athlete's performance in the brain. The foundations might be well established, but the real question, he believed, was whether the athlete could allow the brain to do its bit without interference.

Bannister emphasized that it was important to visualize the desired outcomes in detail. Then, he said, he seemed to step out of his body, to have the sense that he was looking down on himself, watching himself run, with a curious sense of detachment. [\(142\)](#)

His cognitive shift was profound, almost religious. He was no longer aware of moving. He seemed to blend with nature. He discovered what he described as a new source of power a beauty, a source he never dreamt existed. [\(143\)](#)

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Once you are comfortable with the principles and techniques presented in this chapter, it is time to tap into the Bannister Effect and raise the bar.

## **THE NEW MENTAL REHEARSAL**

Advanced mental rehearsal has three qualities beyond simply practicing the desired skill, behavior or response. To increase effectiveness, the future-pace must:

- Be unusual;
- Involve a handicap of sorts;
- Be carried out in two distinct stages.

This is how it is done.

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## EXERCISE 38: RAISING THE BAR

1. Start with a skill you already have and which you would like to improve.

Physical examples might be kicking (for a martial artist), stretching (for an athlete or dancer), lifting a certain weight (for a bodybuilder).

2. Create a movie of yourself (or someone particularly adept) carrying out the procedure.

Make the movie vivid, with strong colors, sounds, and highly distinctive movements. Edit as required, until the skill is being perfectly demonstrated.

3. When the movie is exactly as you want it, step (associate) into the beginning.

At this point you're seeing through your own eyes, hearing through your own ears, and feeling through your own feelings. Run the movie several times, ensuring that you effortlessly reach your goal.

4. Now, introduce a dramatic handicap.

The more bizarre your handicap, the better. Your left, rational cortex may regard it as ridiculous, but it is your non-dominant unconscious mind we are challenging. If this is an act of strength, such as power-lifting, load a couple of bison on to your weights, then a couple more. If you are running, swimming or stretching, make sure there's a powerful counterforce trying to prevent you reaching your goal. If you are performing on stage, you might be doing it in the middle of an air raid or a hurricane. But, and this is crucial to your success, *you must make sure that you always reach the goal, and you must actively feel the effort of reaching it.* Then, test to find out how your level has been reset.

5. Repeat the exercise many times, especially late at night.

Do not skimp on the effort, and *always* hit your target, regardless of how challenging the handicap might be. Keep increasing the handicap, and keep achieving your outcome with precision and satisfaction. Test your progress frequently and keep track of whatever you find different and better.

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BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER, choose a physical skill you would like to improve—kicking higher in a martial art, strengthening your tennis backhand, etc. Use the technique above to enhance your performance. Be sure to test your work. You can also use the same technique to improve performance in other fields, such as public speaking. Remember, whatever the handicap, your outcome must be consistently excellent.

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## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

In this chapter:

- The dangers of not-doing;

- Be suspicious of certainty;
  - Taking inventory;
  - The Being Happy algorithm for change.
- 

Trying consciously to change without a system is a recipe for failure. If it worked simply to decide you were going to stop chewing your nails, quit smoking, lose your anxiety or drop thirty pounds, you would have done it by now. This is the problem with much of the physical and psychological health advice handed out to people by the professionals today: you need to eat less, exercise more, relax, give up the cigarettes and remember your five-a-day ...

Psychologists and self-help gurus often tell their patients and clients to stop living in the past, let go of what happened. The problem is they neglect to tell their patients how to do it.

### **THE DANGERS OF “NOT-DOING”**

Much of the advice people are given (and give themselves) is phrased negatively. By this, we do not mean they are not thinking positively. What we mean is they are trying to get rid of a problem by *not doing* something. Trying to not-do a thought or action can paralyze the person doing it. In fact, this is what causes certain conditions such as anxiety attacks or compulsive behavior to spiral out of control.

Not-doing simply does not work. The human nervous system is not structured to process negators. Negators are words and phrases that act to cancel or reverse the meaning of a phrase or sentence. Examples include the words don't, shouldn't, mustn't and can't.

Every parent and guardian will have experienced the inevitable consequences of telling a toddler, “Don't drop the milk!” Some may even have convinced themselves that they have learned how to practice ‘reverse psychology’ on their children by telling them not to do the thing they want the kids to do.

The problem with negation is your brain has first to make the picture of the action (e.g.: dropping the milk), and then somehow, negate it—by which time, it is often too late. Creating change follows the same principle. It requires that you do rather than you try to not-do things. It requires that you have clear alternative outcomes towards which your brain can move e.g.: “That’s right—hold the milk carefully. Good boy!”

Various approaches try to get people to unlearn negative patterns. These require that the thinker challenge the thoughts that cause the feelings and behavior. Aside from being incredibly boring and time-consuming, what these systems lack is an alternative direction or outcome made compelling by the kind of customized detail that makes sense to the individual and his or her mental maps.

To effectively create a process for change requires you first conduct a personal inventory. This enables you to know what kind of pictures you are making, their qualities (sub-modalities) and where your strong beliefs are located.

People often anthropomorphize problems. They give them names and then act as if the name is a real thing.

“My low self-esteem is holding me back”;

“Your depression means you should change your job”.

While NLP has developed techniques that exploit this tendency, you should always be aware of when you are doing it. When you catch yourself talking about your ‘parts’ —the part that is upset, angry or insecure—immediately ask yourself questions like:

“How do I know part of me is upset?”

“What’s happening inside when I become aware of that?”

These questions will reveal the structure and process of your experience in terms of the sub-modalities you’re using and the order in which they occur.



Suppose you answer the question, “How do you know you are depressed?” with, “Well, I wake up in the morning with this gray cloud hanging over me, and I tell myself, ‘Oh, no, here I go again’, and then I get this empty feeling in my gut and it’s as if I’m stuck and can’t drag myself out of bed ...”

From the above response you have valuable information about structure and process sub-modalities, as well as a few hints about how you might change. The picture (gray cloud) has to be followed by the self-talk “Here I go again” and two [kinesthetics](#) (empty gut and being stuck in bed). You have confirmed that in order for you to have the experience you call “being depressed”, these components must be present each time and in precisely the same order.

What would happen if you systematically change the grey cloud to a pink one? Or make it more translucent, with the sun coming through from behind? How would things be different if you choose to reframe the feeling in your gut as healthy hunger, and it prompted you to hop out of bed and make yourself a delicious and nourishing breakfast? How would things change if you simply scramble the order in which these steps occur?

One depressive client reported feeling “blue” just about all the time. This was a pattern he picked up from the phrases used by his mother when he was young—“feeling blue”, meaning unhappy, “in the pink”, meaning feeling fit and well. However, he quite literally put a blue cast over the pictures he made of everything he did. When that was removed, his mood lifted.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF SEQUENCE**

Another way in which people often fail to change patterns lies in the sequencing of what they do. Even if they know how to do something differently in principle, they might start something too early, too late, or at the wrong point in the chain of actions needed to make a particular strategy work.

Trying to do things too quickly when we should be slowing down is a symptom of our times. The microchip and everything developed from it represents one of the greatest technical achievements of all time. However, a growing dependence on the computer to find instant solutions, make connections, carry out calculations and buy things instantly has a downside.

Some researchers believe this relationship with the computer is weakening some of the brain’s neural circuitry, preventing people from planning far ahead or sequencing their actions in order to

achieve an outcome. Some even suggest that tweeting, texting and ultra-dependence on information delivered in sound bites is affecting the ability to interact socially, creating a kind of pseudo-Asperger's Syndrome. (144)

On the other hand, learning to drive your own feelings, responses and behavior systematically builds these resources, literally changing the architecture of your brain. Part of the secret of doing this effectively is learning to pay attention to what matters, including doing things in the correct order.

Given the apparently unlimited processing power of the brain, it is easy to rely on our ability to carry out several complex actions at the same time. Except, in practice, multi-tasking, as it is more commonly known, is a myth. Trying to do more than one thing at a time, some scientists believe, causes the stress hormone, cortisol to rage through your system. If this is prolonged, you may even suffer chronic damage to the neural structures of your brain.

People, especially women who believe they can multi-task, are in fact switching rapidly between tasks. (145) This does not mean they are doing any of these tasks better than, or even as well as they would if working on one activity at a time. According to University of California Professor Russell Poldrack, information we take in while multi-tasking goes into the striatum. This is an area of the brain associated with learning new skills, but from which it is difficult to extract facts and ideas. If we attend to one thing at a time without distraction, information travels to the hippocampus, a region better specialized in storing and recalling information.

Society is changing, Professor Poldrack says, but at a cost. Humans are not designed to spread their attention. "We're really built to focus." (146)

Obviously, a certain amount of work must be done before you can change your thinking and move your life from being 'down' to Being Happy. Fortunately, if you have been following the advice and doing the exercises in previous chapters, most of the work has already been done. From this point forward, you will be bringing all the components together, sequencing them and setting up your own customized process for bringing about rapid and lasting change.

## **YOUR MENTAL SPAM FILTER**

If you log on to your email account without some kind of protection against unwanted mail, your system suddenly starts to run slow as it goes down under the weight of hundreds of messages.

But, if you install a quality spam filter, your troubles are minimized. Your working memory (the amount of processing power available to get tasks done) is like the Random-Access Memory (RAM) in your computer where data is temporarily held for later use.

The ability to clear your mental RAM of irrelevant information and filter unimportant incoming data is critical to optimal functioning. Neuroscientists have been able to identify the location of the brain's RAM-storage area. It is called the posterior parietal cortex, (147) while its spam-filter is situated in parts of the basal ganglia and the prefrontal cortex, also involved in movement and rational thinking. (148)

Attempting to multi-task creates a bottleneck in the prefrontal cortex. This in turn impacts your working memory, resulting in stress, brain fog and a cognitive system running at half-speed or less. Happily, the human brain is extraordinarily adaptive and the goal of being able to multi-task may not be entirely out of reach. Australian neuroscientist Paul Dux has demonstrated that it is possible to train yourself to speed up the processing power of your prefrontal cortex, thereby reducing the gap between two simple tasks such as hitting a button and saying a pre-assigned word in response to a specific cue. However, he admits that this is not true multi-tasking of a kind that would allow us to process two or more complex tasks simultaneously. (149)

## **FLUSHING THE CACHE**

More than 50 years ago, it was believed that individuals were capable of storing between five and nine chunks of information in their short-term memory at any one time. (150) Since then, more refined analysis shows the number is likely to be a lot smaller, as few as four chunks of information. (151) This supports our proposal that the mental cache needs a regular flushing to keep a brain running smoothly.

Over the years, we have found a number of strategies that many hundreds of clients have found useful in improving their mental and physical well-being. Here are a few that you can apply immediately to start to improve your brain function so you can process information faster, remember better, and generally think more clearly.

- **Get enough sleep**

Inadequate or interrupted sleep can cause a wide range of problems, ranging from depression and obesity to cancer and Type II diabetes. Fuzzy thinking—as any student who has pulled one too many all-nighters knows—is an inevitable result. (152) Aim at getting somewhere between seven and eight hours of sleep a night.

During the day, as mental pressure mounts, burn-out sets in and the quality of your mental processing drops. Remedy this with a 30-minute midday snooze which can prevent further deterioration. A 60-minute nap will enhance information processing, learning and reverse information overload. There are products on the market, including the [BrainFit™](#), that work with your brainwaves to create this state within ten to twenty minutes. Whether you choose technology or nature, schedule regular naps. (153) Cookies and milk are optional.

- **Get regular exercise**

You know your muscles get weak and flaccid if you do not get enough exercise—but, so does your mind. Regular physical exercise is as effective as medication in treating major depression among middle-aged and elderly patients. Simultaneously, regular exercise has been shown to improve mental abilities. (154) How much or how little is up to you. Researcher James Blumenthal and his colleagues discovered the actual duration of exercise does not seem to matter. Simply exercising regularly is what appears to make the difference.

- **Eat properly**

The relationship between what you eat and how you think is complex and often confusing. Broadly speaking, a diet high in junk—too much sugar, salt, fat and unrefined carbohydrates—drains energy from all systems, including from your cognitive processes. Although the brain accounts for just two percent of adult body weight, it requires an enormous amount of energy. Blood-flow needs to be adequate for you to be able to think, reason and create. Therefore, it figures that the fuel you put into your body should be of high quality. It should be adequate to promote optimum health, but not so much as to trigger the wide range of degenerative diseases associated with eating too much. (155)

- **Laugh more**

Humor is an essentially tool of positive change. A little gentle goading, done with good rapport, can achieve wonders. As agents of change, we never try to diagnose people or to treat someone else's diagnosis. We are trying to make diagnoses wrong. If people come in and say they are depressed, we want them laughing as quickly as possible so that every time they think about being depressed, they burst out laughing. Not everybody has a sense of humor, so not everybody can use humor. But we (the authors) use it all the time, because we think it is important that people learn to laugh at their own beliefs and difficulties. At precisely the moment they start to laugh, they create a chemical foundation on which to build change.

People instinctively feel better when they laugh. The definitive study on laughing, health and well-being has yet to be done. What we know is that laughing can improve blood flow, help you fight off infection, stabilize blood sugar levels, improve the quality of relaxation and sleep, and possibly even reverse the progression of certain serious diseases. [\(156\)](#) More remarkably, simply *expecting* to have a good laugh, say, by settling down to watch a funny movie, boosts your endorphins by 27% and your human growth hormone (HGH) levels by a massive 87%. [\(157\)](#)

- **Take time to play**

Play is not only fun, but is necessary for you to become smarter, more relaxed and better able to solve problems. It may also save your life and that of those around you.

After Charles Whitman climbed the tower on the University of Texas's Austin campus and shot 46 people in 1966, psychiatrist Stuart Brown set out to find out what the killer had in common with other people also convicted of mass murder. Though backgrounds were different, two crucial similarities emerged. The majority came from abusive environments, and they never learned to play. [\(158\)](#)

Play, it seems, is crucial to our childhood development and in maintaining health and well-being in later life. To maximize the impact of adult play, favor freestyle rather than rule-bound activities, thereby encouraging improvisation and creativity.

Play falls into three types:

1) **Body play**: physical activity you do to enjoy, not because you want to win or need to lose weight;

2) **Object play**: like painting, sculpting, simply 'messing around' the way kids love to finger-paint;

3) **Social play**: including hanging out with other people, chatting, debating, flirting or pitting mental wits simply for the fun of it. [\(159\)](#)

#### • **Close open loops**

Leaving tasks unfinished, whether you consciously remember them or not, can create anxiety, ranging from mild to extreme. [\(160\)](#) These 'open loops' are what help busy waiters remember unfilled orders; but, they can also cause problems for people trying unsuccessfully to multi-task, clogging up and slowing down the entire system.

When working with stressed-out businessmen, it sometimes helps to have them go through all the motor activities of the day—opening and closing drawers, taking out and putting back files, lifting the telephone and hanging up again, and so on. This helps to counteract the cumulative effect of all the interrupted and unfinished tasks of the day.

From time to time, review your own life. Make a list of unfinished tasks, eliminating those that really do not need to be done, and prioritizing the rest. Work your way through your list, systematically closing each loop in turn. You can even do this at night as you drift off to sleep, simply running through your day and noticing which tasks you have successfully completed, and noting important, unfinished jobs in a mental (or, even a physical) notebook for attention the following day.

#### • **Learn to meditate**

Continuing our computer analogy, meditation can be thought of as a hard reboot, an operation to reset the system without eliminating saved data and software by clearing out the RAM and superfluous information not saved.

Daily meditation sessions have been shown within a relatively short time to improve attention while diminishing anxiety, depression, anger, and fatigue. Energy, both mental and physical, improves; stress-related cortisol levels drop, and your immune system comes back on line. [\(161\)](#)

Of all the cache-flushing strategies, meditation is arguably the most important. For relatively little investment of time and effort (although consistency and repetition are critical for good results), the benefits of meditation extend across multiple areas of your life ([see Appendix C](#)).

## **BELIEF AND DETERMINATION**

You need to develop the appropriate attitude to make all this work. You deserve this. The secret of success lies in becoming determined to succeed. Often people are not able to act more resourcefully simply because they simply don't know how. Knowing you have choices and committing to the pursuit of those choices propels you forward in your personal development.

The simple way to crank up your determination is:

1. Establish the sub-modalities of the something you know you will achieve because you are determined to do so;
2. Do the same with the sub-modalities of something you want to achieve;
3. Make the sub-modalities of two, the same as those of one.

It is important to do this rapidly when making this sort of change. Your brain learns quickly. Give up the idea now that learning has to be slow and arduous. If information is presented too slowly, the brain cannot detect a pattern. If you watched a movie one frame a day, you wouldn't be able to understand anything about the production. Patterns only make sense when they run quickly.

One of the earliest tools developed in NLP, referred to as the Swish Pattern, uses two fundamental abilities of the brain—to change subjective experience by altering the qualities of the mental imagery, and, to make these changes rapidly. The Swish Pattern was developed to move people from their present state into a desired state. It is simple and it works.

Take a moment now and set things up so that your desire to be successful at learning how to optimize your life in a specific area (such as learning to master the principles and techniques in

this book) becomes a determination to do so. If necessary, refer back to the section on changing beliefs. Make sure you take on the qualities of enthusiasm, curiosity and unshakable resolve. Once you understand the mechanics of change, you will begin to understand how some people can move in a matter of moments from sick to well, depressed to cheerful, anxious to deeply relaxed.

Just because you believe something does not make it true. The techniques of NLP, particularly managing the pictures you make in your head and their sub-modalities, provide the means for you to review your beliefs, decide which of them are useful and worth keeping and to identify those that would benefit your life if changed. The things you believe are structured differently from the things you do not believe. This means that when you change your mind-set—for example, from skepticism to believing that putting everything in this book into practice is surprisingly easy and enjoyable—you can move on to setting up your personal formula for change.

An algorithm is often defined as a precise set of rules that when applied in a particular sequence, can systematically move something from one state to another. While the Being Happy algorithm below might appear structured and sequential, it is highly flexible due to the range of situations to which it can be applied. The steps remain the same. The content can be different. With this and all effective NLP approaches, success lies in close observation, careful preparation and systematic execution.



### **MASTER EXERCISE 39: The Being Happy algorithm for change**

1. Your time line.

Ensure that you have organized it so that your past is diagonally behind you, and the future in front. (See [Chapter 12](#) for review if necessary).



## 2. Design your outcome.

Be systematic. Make sure you are using all sensory modalities. Make your timeline as richly appealing and as detailed as possible. Make sure you focus on what you want to have happen, rather than on what you do not want to happen. Do this *before* you review any problem you might be dealing with. This is very important. If you start by accessing your problem state, you risk getting stuck in negativity.

## 3. Identify whatever stands in the way of accomplishing your goal in step two.

Is it a belief or a behavior? How do you know it is there? Identify the sub-modalities; notice the sequence of the segments when the problem experience occurs.

## 4. Resolve or remove the obstacle.

Refer to your inventory in step three for clues. Review the second part of this book for the appropriate principles or techniques.

## 5. Place your desired outcome on your future time line and practice your new belief, behavior or response.

See [Chapter 14](#) to refresh yourself on mental rehearsal and future-pacing.

## 6. Test in the real world.

Always try out your new responses and behaviors in the real world, and keep notes of what is different and better in your life. Ignore what you have not yet accomplished. Focus on identifying your achievements, however big or small, and building on those. Be obsessive about crediting yourself with the ability to change and grow. Do not be surprised if good things happen sooner than you think. Most people believe they have to struggle, or that change takes a long time. In reality it is the floundering about, the messing around and failing to commit to change, that takes up time; change itself can happen almost instantly if it is set up correctly and you are determined to follow through.

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Now you know how to create a life centered on Being Happy. Do not waste your time trying to change until you have made yourself extremely determined. Then apply that determination where it really matters.

At the beginning of this book we identified the conditions of Being Happy as accountability, pro-activity, sensory acuity and adaptability. We said you needed all four of these characteristics in order to organize your experience efficiently and effectively. We advised you to:

- Take responsibility for your own experiences instead of blaming someone or something else;
- Take action to change your life, rather than whining about it to your partner, friends or a therapist;
- Pay attention to what's important—your own patterns, your own resources, your own successes;
- Be prepared to change tactics if your results are not what you want, or your circumstances change.

Review these qualities now and decide which you can work on first. This will clear the way so that you can make even more far-reaching changes along the line.

Do not surrender to diagnoses, such as clinical depression or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Most people who have been traumatized are simply doing something those who have not been traumatized are not. They are constantly reliving their experiences. They are making life-size, detailed pictures of the traumatizing event—and they should not.

If you are suffering fear, anxiety or pain, you need to step back and take a look at how you structure your experience. What are you telling yourself, what images keep cropping up in your mind's-eye? From this, the means of changing the suffering will suddenly become apparent. If somebody says you should have more confidence, it does not help if you do not know how you

are doing “insecurity”. However, once you understand the process you can mentally shift things from one state to a more desirable one.

Another example: some people are absolutely certain that they are unlovable. Because of this, they will rarely go out and try to meet people. When they do, they will almost always be wracked with fear and doubt. We think it is funny how certain some people can be about their doubt—and, as soon as they understand that to have doubt, they must have certainty, things begin to change. You have to be really sure you have doubt in order for it to be a problem. If this describes you, then you are now in a position to find out what you are certain about and start to give yourself doubt about your limitations, and certainty about the things you want.

When a client walks in the door, we do not arbitrarily set about trying to change him or her. There is a certain amount of preparation that we do—and this is what you also need to do. You need to take inventory so that you know where your assets and your liabilities are located. Knowing these means you can move things around, from the liabilities location to wherever you store your assets. Sometimes, you need to examine very closely what you consider to be assets in case stupidity has crept in. In this case, move them directly into the liabilities location.

In short, if you find yourself extremely solemn and certain about something and you are very dismissive about people who do not share your beliefs, stop. Examine what you are thinking and feeling very closely. This may be the very area in which you need to change. Above all, **when you find yourself hesitating**, even though you really want a particular change, **you need to act**—and act now. If you must procrastinate, procrastinate about putting things off.

Welcome to Being Happy.

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## EPILOGUE

Just do it ...now

Multiple conditions compete for the position of Disease of our Time, but if we had to choose one, it would be hesitation.

Think of the number of experiences you have missed out on, simply because you failed to act decisively when that window of opportunity opened. No doubt you have lots of excuses:

“The time wasn’t right.”

“I didn’t have the resources.”

“I didn’t want to give up my security,”

And so on...

Looking back, are you really happy that you failed to act?

The most important message we want you to take away from this book is: if you are finally sick and tired of being sick and tired, the time has come to stop putting off everything you have been putting off.

Life-planners and life coaches seem to believe the bigger and juicier the goal, the more appealing it is. Of course, you know by now that the bigger the goal, the greater the gap between where you are and where you want to be. As a result of reading this book you know that to establish a direction to your life, you must design smaller goals to function as markers to keep you on track. You realize that it is essential to make each stage increasingly more enjoyable so you can maintain your momentum. You now know, in order to prosper, you need to stop procrastinating. You need to turn hesitation into action, any and every time you encounter something worth pursuing.

The final exercise we offer here is a proven NLP approach for turning hesitation into an insatiable, wanton desire to simply GO FOR IT! It is a technique you can set up and trigger whenever you want to power through the stages you have set up.

This technique uses anchors (see [Appendix A](#)) chained together in a sequence that swiftly move you through a succession of states into the one that smashes through hesitation.

These states are:

1. Hesitation
2. Frustration
3. Impatience
4. Wanton Desire
5. GO FOR IT!

Why must you pass through these particular states? Frustration is an extremely useful launch-pad for achievement provided you don't allow yourself to stay stuck in that state. If you're sufficiently frustrated, you'll become impatient for change. If you design your outcome systematically and within the parameters previously discussed, simple desire transforms into lust.

Lust can be a good thing. When the lust builds to an almost unbearable point, all you need to do is: let go. Snap! Swoosh...like an arrow zooming toward a target.

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### **EXERCISE 40: OVERCOMING HESITATION**

1. Think of what *hesitation* really means to you.

Think of a time you hesitated (perhaps when you were thinking about quitting smoking, starting an exercise program or making a phone call you did not want to make). How does hesitating look, feel and sound to you? Be specific. As soon as it feels 'real', anchor it [kinesthetically](#) (say, with a touch on one knuckle).

2. Move back in time to some of your key moments of hesitation and regret.

Amplify the anchor for each event and stack them in the same place.

3. Anchor the next three states—frustration, impatience, wanton desire—in turn.

Recall examples from your past of experiences representing each of these three states; see, hear and feel them as if they were happening right now. Next, anchor each in a different location.

4. When you access and anchor the GO FOR IT! state, use sub-modalities to amplify your response.

Think of a time when you just went for what you wanted. Make the final state of action highly specific and extremely powerful. It must literally involve you getting up and going toward an objective. Steep yourself in that experience; amplify its sub-modalities. Now anchor it.

5. This fifth step involves a process we call chaining.

Chaining links your anchors together so that firing the first sets off the others in quick succession. This will push you into a strong, focused, highly targeted GO FOR IT! state of mind.

- a. As you fire the first anchor, think of all the times when you stopped yourself from doing what you really wanted to do;
- b. Once you access this state, fire the second anchor. Hold both anchors for a moment; release the first anchor;
- c. As your response switches from anchor number one to anchor number two, fire off anchor number three;
- d. Test again. Fire anchor number one; when it triggers anchor two and followed by anchor three, fire anchor number four.
- e. Repeat until firing the first anchor automatically drives your experience through all other anchors and directly into your GO FOR IT! state.

**Note:** You may find this exercise easier to do with a friend. Should you continue to have difficulty, consult a suitably qualified and experienced NLP practitioner.

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Psychologists classify the act of learning as state-specific. This means that the new response or behavior needs to generalize then be reinserted into the appropriate area of your life. Once you have accomplished this, you will find it increasingly easy to fire off the first anchor and experience yourself moving seamlessly through all five states into your GO FOR IT! state.



To achieve this mastery, simply think of three to five situations in the future where moving from hesitation to GO FOR IT! would be a useful response; then fire your anchors while mentally rehearsing the details of the transitions until you are fully comfortable with the prospect of conquering hesitation.

There are times when hesitation is good. It acts as an early-warning system, that feeling in your gut that tells you to be wary of a certain deal, not to enter a stranger's home, or to call a cab rather than accept a ride. This is not the type of hesitation you want to minimize. This type of hesitation is central to survival and you already have a technique to protect you in these situations.

The hesitation you do want to address includes situations such as not picking up the phone to deal with an issue; failing to take an opportunity because you are afraid or not broaching a difficult subject with your spouse. These are examples of situations where hesitation can hurt you rather than help you succeed. Your unconscious mind is quite literal. Be sure you have thought things through first. You do not want to rocket from hesitation into stupidity, or worse, death.

## **WRAPPING UP**

Now, before you finish this book, answer this question: Have you ever been in a really deep trance? We think of trance – good trance, that is – as a learning state: an opportunity to allow information to flow in effortlessly, and to take on new behaviors as smoothly as possible.

Every time you did one of the exercises in this book, you went inside into a kind of trance; when you become absorbed in a book or a movie to the point where it takes a moment or two to realize that somebody's been speaking to you, you're in a trance. When you think, or imagine, or visualize a new outcome, you're in a kind of trance.

But, how did you know that you were in trance while you were in trance? What happened first ... and, then ... and, then? And how did you know after you came out that you'd been in trance?

You see, people go into trance all the time. You go into trance all the time. It's like there's a great vortex of trance, ready to open up whenever there's something your unconscious wants you to do. Like we say, maybe it happens while somebody's talking to you, or you're listening to music. Maybe it happens when you're reading something important, like this book. But, wherever and whenever, it just happens and what happened as you find yourself drifting deeper and deeper as

your unconscious takes you into a deep enough trance for you to have some really powerful feelings – including a feeling of great urgency?

Of course, all feelings are important in some way or another, but, if you have one that's attached to a voice that says, "Aah! ... no, not now – later", then it means you can put things off.

And, of course, there are some things you should put off – dying, for example – is one of those things you shouldn't get around to for quite a while yet. Or getting sick, or falling off cliffs, or making hasty decisions you're bound to regret ...

But, on the other hand, there are those feelings, such as the one when you swim under water and you feel the need to breathe and you struggle with every fiber of your soul to make sure your head breaks through the top of the water - that's a sense of urgency - and it's not a particular pleasant feeling sometimes, but it doesn't really matter whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, because you feel driven to take that breath and fill your lungs with air. Just to breathe in and all the way out ...

Now, for us, there's another feeling that accompanies the ability to look at something you need to be able to do - and to feel a little bit stronger, a sense of urgency, because if you see your table piling up with unpaid bills, or books you never read, or music you never listen to, you can imagine how you'd be at ninety years old and looking back at your life and feeling stupid, really stupid, at all the time and money and energy you wasted then when you could do everything and have everything, now.

Because, you see, when you realize that everything you put aside and don't finish, something is left unfinished in your body, and it builds up over time. Every task that isn't completed leaves residual stress, so it makes sense, instead, to take a look at what needs to be done and make sure you have just the right voice, the right sense of urgency, filled with energy and excitement and promise, so it's as if your unconscious reorganizes it so that every item left unfinished is going to build up stress, but every action you take in the direction you want to go, every page you turn, makes you feel a wonderful sense of relaxation, getting to feel smarter and more successful, so that finishing things would become second nature.

But, just before that happens, as your unconscious makes all the necessary adjustments, things it has to do first is go back and unravel the past, to take away the thousands of unfinished moments you have and literally rewind them so they run backwards, and, instead, put up big, attractive, shiny pictures wherever you start finishing things - a few tonight, a few more tomorrow, and, in

the days and weeks ahead, you find yourself propelled into finishing more and more things and having a greater sense of satisfaction and surprise, because, not only will you look at your unfinished tasks and finish them, but you'll go through all the projects on your list and decide which are worth finishing and which can be thrown out, because they just don't matter any more

...

RICHARD BANDLER AND GARNER THOMSON

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## 10 QUICK FIXES

**TO CLEAR YOUR HEAD;**

**LIFT YOUR MOOD; AND**

**IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE**

Sometimes you will not have the time to run through an entire exercise. At other times, your energy levels may feel depleted, making it difficult to initiate or resume the whole Being Happy process. The following scientifically grounded 'quick fixes' are designed to help you jog yourself out of your inertia and get going again. While they are all highly effective short-term interventions, they are not intended to replace the program presented in this book.

1. If you are emotionally stuck

a. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth for three minutes, making the out-breath slightly longer than the in-breath.

b. Ask your unconscious for a solution to, or relief from, your problem, and then move your eyes in large circles, clockwise and counter-clockwise while counting out loud from 50 to one.

c. Shift your position.

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2. To curb an impulse to snack

Review in detail your last meal. Remember the tastes, smells, appearance etc, of the foods you ate. Replaying a previous meal (rather than fantasizing about the next one) has the effect of suppressing appetite. [\(162\)](#)

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3. If you are depressed

Some kinds of depression are related to functional brain asymmetry meaning the right and left hemispheres are not functioning coherently. [\(163\)](#) Since physical movements on one side of your body activate the opposite side of your brain, we suggest adding such movements to anything else you're doing to deal with your condition.

Some suggestions:

- Throw a tennis ball from hand to hand. Gradually widen the gap. Practice doing it with your eyes shut.
- March with knees lifted high. Touch opposite hand to opposite knee with each step.

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4. To improve your physical performance

Talk to yourself. Even simple, positive self-talk ("I can jump high") has been shown to improve the strength and endurance of athletes, an indication that verbalizing the action you want to take prompts the cerebral cortex to activate the activity-specific muscle fibers. [\(164\)](#)

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5. To drive better and more safely

Give yourself a running commentary as you drive, noting markings, signs, road quality, possible hazards ahead, weather conditions etc. Talking to yourself this way builds what aviation, military and oil drilling experts call “situation awareness” (SA), an important requirement for improving skills. [\(165\)](#) Consciously directing your attention outwards and commenting on your actions while driving will improve your own SA. [\(166\)](#)

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6. To get an irritating tune out of your head

People, especially those prone to obsessive-compulsive behavior, often complain that a tune gets stuck in their heads and they can't get rid of it. Hebb's Postulate, “Neurons that fire together, wire together”, [\(167\)](#) also works in reverse: Neurons that fire apart, wire apart. Kill the annoying tune by deliberately running the song in your head. Simultaneously, sing random notes aloud, or even another tune, if you feel really up for a challenge. Within moments, the irritating song will fade out of your awareness.

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7. To reduce daydreaming and improve your memory

Doodle while listening to a speaker whose talk you want to recall. Doodlers in randomized control tests recalled nearly 30% more information than non-doodlers, [\(168\)](#) possibly because doodling ties up both [visual](#) and [kinesthetic](#) channels, leaving the [auditory](#) channel clear for input.

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8. To change your mood from down to up

- a. Simply recall the details of a happy experience in as much detail as possible.
- b. Pay attention to all sensory details, but especially the visual aspects.
- c. Anchor the response.

This vintage NLP technique has been found to be rooted in scientific fact. Since we tend to remember sad or depressing experiences when we are feeling down, we suggest making a list of positive memories when you're in a good mood, to refer to when you are not. [\(169\)](#)

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#### 9. Build a Being Happy mindset in 30 seconds

Spend 15 seconds twice a day recalling in detail a pleasant experience from the day before. This can give a 15% instant boost in cheerfulness. [\(170\)](#) We suggest making this a daily habit.

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#### 10. If you need a quick boost

Sit up. More than thirty years since explorers in the field of NLP first observed that body posture directly influenced mood, researchers have confirmed that sitting with your back erect and chest pushed out does instantly lift your mood and make you feel more confident. Subjects asked to list their best or worst qualities were found to be affected by whether they sat upright, or, in what the researchers called a “doubtful posture”—with their spines curved and chest slumped. [\(171\)](#)

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## APPENDIX A

## **ANCHORS AND ANCHORING**

An anchor is a trigger, or stimulus that evokes a specific response. It may be set in any of your five senses. Anchors occur in the form of words, physical touches or actions, sights, and, particularly certain sounds and smells (think about your reaction when you hear “your song” playing on the radio, or, smell cookies, baking bread, or, newly cut grass). Sometimes they may occur internally and are triggered by words, self-talk, imagery or sensations.

Language represents the most commonly encountered form of anchor. Since the description (the word) is not the thing it describes, it must trigger associations to a greater or lesser degree thus prompting the listener to make sense of what’s being said.

Anchors may be set accidentally or deliberately; overtly, or, covertly. Anchors can be rapidly installed, as with the “one-pass learning” experienced by some phobics, or, over a period of time, through gradual conditioning. Some may be genetic—e.g., the response to a baby’s smile.

The firing of an anchor may have a positive or a negative effect on the subject.

Anchoring is used in NLP as a technique to facilitate state management, either by a practitioner or by the subject himself. To this end, a strong, known and desired state is set up and deliberately attached to a trigger. This facilitates reflexive access to the desired state at will.

Effective anchors need to meet several criteria. They must be:

- Unique and specific (in the same place, using the same intensity of touch, volume, tonality, etc), otherwise conditioning will not occur;
- Set just as the response peaks, to avoid anchoring the state as it subsides;
- Refreshed, to minimize the risk of the effect fading away.

Anchors may be:

- Stacked (similar states anchored to the same trigger in order to create a more powerful “composite” state);

and

- Collapsed (two dissimilar anchors fired simultaneously with the intention of either neutralizing each other, or creating an “integrated” state).

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#### **EXERCISE 41: SETTING AN ANCHOR**

1. Remember a time when you experienced a particularly heightened, positive emotion—joy, bliss, excitement, etc.
2. Recreate that experience as fully as possible. See what you saw. Hear what you heard and feel what you felt.
3. Intensify these feeling. Notice the direction your feelings move. Spin this feeling faster and faster. Increase the intensity of the other sub-modalities, brightening the colors, bringing the image closer, etc.
4. As the feeling begins to peak, firmly press the back of your hand, or, bring the thumb and forefinger of one hand firmly together. Then, let go, just before you sense the feeling subsiding.
5. Change your position (break the state). Test the anchor by repeating the action exactly the same way as before. Notice how the original response returns.
6. Repeat, if necessary, until the anchor is reliably in place.
7. Refresh your anchor regularly to ensure it lasts. Although a well-set anchor will probably last a long time, anchors may lose their potency if not used.



**Note:** You can stack anchors by linking several responses to the same trigger. The response will be a synthesis of all the separate anchors, but should be more intensely experienced than any of them individually.

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When a simple response is causing problems (something like irritation at the sound of somebody else's cell phone ringing), the anchor may be effectively collapsed.



#### **EXERCISE 42: COLLAPSING ANCHORS**

1. Identify a response you'd prefer to have in place of the unwanted response. Identify an occasion where you strongly experienced that preferred state. Step into this memory and intensify it. Anchor it on one part of your body. Fire the anchor to make sure that the state is powerful and the anchor properly set. Change state by shifting body position, humming a tune, looking around the room, and so on.
2. Next think of the state you wish to change. As you re-experience this undesirable response, anchor it on another part of your body. Test, then change state by shifting your physical position.
3. When you've tested to make sure each anchor is properly set, fire both simultaneously. The effect of the two contrasting anchors integrating is usually mildly confusing. Hold the anchors until any confusion subsides.
4. Slowly lift the anchor of the unwanted state, followed a few seconds later by the anchor for the resource state.

5. Test by trying to trigger the unwanted response. Instead, your response should be more neutral, or, the resource state should dominate.

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## APPENDIX B: SUB-MODALITY DISTINCTIONS

### –the differences that make the difference

The pictures, sounds and feelings (the sensory modalities) you use to create your internal models of reality are organized in a certain sequence. A picture may prompt you to speak, or comment, to yourself. You'll certainly have a feeling (a [kinesthetic](#)) as a result of either [visualizing](#) or talking to yourself.

You may find you favor one modality over the others. This does not mean you do not use the other modalities; it is simply a sensory preference. Be aware that problem behavior is often locked into the sensory system(s) that are *not* in your conscious awareness. For example, a client who complains that he or she “just can't see” his or her way clear to feeling better than they do now gives us some insight into a need to develop a visual representation of the desired outcome (seeing a clear way).

While these component parts and the order in which they are arranged are important, the characteristics of each modality are equally important. When you examine your pictures, you'll find they have variations. Some are moving, while others are still; they might be colorful or monochromatic. They may be framed or panoramic, as if you're actually inside the experience, seeing it with your own eyes, hearing with your own ears and feeling with your own feelings. Likewise, your [auditory](#) and [kinesthetic](#) modalities have characteristics (sub-modalities).

Changing sub-modalities systematically can have a profound effect on your subjective experience. When experimenting with your own sub-modalities, change one at a time. Then put it back before moving on to the next. Keep a note of what happens for future reference.

**Note:** All sub-modalities are led by a driver. For example, rather than change all the qualities of a given sub-modality, look for the one that causes the entire structure (the Gestalt) to change.

Association/Dissociation, Size and Location, Still/Moving are the most frequently encountered drivers. [\(172\)](#)

The list that follows is by no means complete. Add the distinctions you identify from your own experience. Then, include experiences and behavior, particular the patterns, you observe among your friends, family and colleagues.

## **VISUAL**

Associated/dissociated

Color/black and white

Moving/still

Location

Size

Vivid/pastel

Framed/panoramic

Shape

Near/mid/far

Distinct/fuzzy

2-D/3-D

Foreground/background

Single/multiple images

Smooth/jerky

Fragmented/uninterrupted

Flat on/tilted

Bright/dull

Smooth transitions/jump-cuts

Sparkly etc.

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## **AUDITORY**

Loud/soft

Inside/outside head

Direction

Tonality

Pitch

Tempo (speed)

Rhythm

Continuous/interrupted;

Duration

Distance

Clear/diffuse

Echo

Monaural/stereo

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## **KINESTHETIC**

Localized/whole-bodied

Movement

Location

Direction

Extent (where it starts and where it finishes)

Pressure

Temperature

Duration

Intensity

Size

Shape

Tempo

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## **APPENDIX C: INSIDE OUT: TAMING THE MONKEY MIND**

Many people complain, or show the symptoms, of scattered thinking. Failure to curb this self-talk, mental imagery, and random feelings and sensations, leads to a condition we call “runaway mind”.

You may have experienced this yourself. How many times have you lain awake with the thoughts of the day racing around inside your head, making sleep impossible? Or, after a heated argument, the anger lingers for days as you run and re-run the incident along with everything you ought to have said at the time, but did not.

Some Eastern traditions call this “monkey mind”. To them, the untamed mind skitters from branch to branch, leaving confusion, exhaustion and depression in its wake. Enlightenment, they say, is not an elevated state of rarefied thinking. Rather it’s the taming of the monkey mind that allows the true nature of “being” to shine through.

In this model, taming the monkey mind means providing a more appealing alternative to constantly leaping around—a safe place of peace, relaxation, regeneration and change.

Our ability to improve our health and mental well-being by controlling the mind is beyond question. Studies demonstrate how regular periods of inward focus can positively affect our physical well-being. Periods of mental “down-time”, properly carried out, have been shown to:

- Reduce anxiety and depression;
- Help treat addictive behavior;
- Lower blood pressure;
- Improve coping strategies;
- Reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease;

- Enhance outcomes of psychotherapies, surgery and other treatments. [\(173\)](#)

Recent research suggests those engaging in short and long-term meditation may even directly trigger “consistent and constitutive changes” in gene expression. In other words, taking time out to “go inside your mind” may actually help you rewrite your own genetic code. [\(174\)](#) Each time you sit and meditate, you may be sitting for generations to come as your enhanced genes get passed down to your descendants.

In the West, there is still some confusion and mistrust about mind-body techniques imported from other cultures. At best, they are seen as little more than getting a bit of relaxation, rather like listening to music or taking a snooze; at worst, they’re regarded by some as infecting our minds with passivity or foreign religious beliefs.

This is a pity, since it is becoming absolutely clear that meditation and self-hypnosis techniques are profoundly effective tools in developing the qualities of hope, healing and happiness—true mind-body tools you can use to increase energy, engagement with the outside world and to develop personal freedom.

Many people argue over the differences between meditation and self-hypnosis. In reality it probably doesn’t matter. Some people prefer a more active, directed approach, while others favor a more content-free undirected technique. It’s likely that the act of sitting regularly and spending fifteen to twenty minutes reflecting on your inner world will show benefits, whichever approach you prefer. Try both and decide for yourself.

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### **EXERCISE 43: DIRECTED SELF-HYPNOSIS**

Time: 15 to 20 minutes

1. Tell yourself that you’ll spend the next fifteen to 20 minutes in a state of deep relaxation.

Sit somewhere comfortable and quiet and start by looking upwards, as if inside your head, towards the crown.

2. Take a deep breath through your nose.

Hold the breath for a few moments, then release it and allow your eyelids to close down, about a third of the way while keeping your eyes still looking up.

3. Take a second breath.

Hold it a little longer, then, as you let it out, allow your eyelids close another third of the way down (eyes still looking up).

4. Take a third breath.

Hold it longer still, then, as you breathe out, let your eyelids close all the way. Relax your eyes and settle back to accept the comfort and support of your chair.

5. After a few moments, imagine you're watching yourself from outside your body.

Notice the signs of growing relaxation: the softening of your muscles, the shallowness of your breath, the way your face smoothes out.

6. Next, open up the center of the picture, rather like the iris of a camera, allowing a second image to come through.

As the image behind expands, notice that it's of you, but twice as relaxed as before.

7. Stay with that image for a moment, then repeat from Step 6, doubling the indicators of deepening relaxation each time.

8. Keep repeating the above three steps.

9. Don't worry if you seem to drift off. When your awareness returns, return to your images of deepening relaxation.



10. When the time comes for you to return to your daily activity, simply visualize yourself stepping back into your body.

Wait a few seconds. Slowly open your eyes and return to your normal day's activities.

For those who prefer a more passive technique, the following will allow you to enter a meditative state.

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#### **EXERCISE 44: THE RELAXATION RESPONSE**

Time: 15 to 20 Minutes (twice a day for maximum effect)

1. Start by selecting an anchor word such as “peace”, “calm”, “quiet”, “relax”.

You can also choose a neutral word such as the number “one”. Whichever word you choose, it should remain the same for all sessions from now on.

2. Sit quietly and comfortably for a few moments to allow the body to start to settle down.

Each time you exhale, softly and silently repeat your word. You aren't required to visualize anything or try to relax, or do anything else. Simply think the word once each time you breathe out.

3. Accept that thoughts and distractions will come, but don't fall into the trap of trying to resist them.

Rather, each time you realize you've been thinking of something else, gently return to the word.

4. When you've finished your fifteen to twenty minutes, let go of the word and sit for a few seconds.

Allow your body to acclimate to the outside world before getting up.

**Note:** Both of the above protocols are more than simple relaxation techniques. Whatever happens during the fifteen to twenty minutes is less important than how it spills out into the rest of your life. Instead of trying to have a good meditative session, pay attention to what's different and better about the way you experience yourself and the people and the world around you.

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These techniques are not Band-Aids® to be used to fix a particular condition. They're life-tools that support and enhance everything you do, whether you're working to improve your health and well-being, or enjoying the fruits of having done so.

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## **RECOMMENDED READING AND AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCES**

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DVD.*DHE 2000*, CD.

Personal Enhancement Series, CD.

Persuasion Engineering, DVD.

John LaValle, NLP Practitioner Set, CD.

These and many more DVDs and CDs available from: [www.nlpstore.com](http://www.nlpstore.com).

*Adventures in Neuro-Hypnotic Repatterning* (DVD set and PAL-version videos),

*Thirty Years of NLP: How to Live a Happy Life* (DVD set), and other products by Richard Bandler available from Matrix Essential Training Alliance

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## **WEBSITES**

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<http://www.RichardBandler.com>

<http://www.BrainFitXL.com>

<http://www.PureNLP.com>

<http://www.NLPInstitutes.com>

<http://www.NLPTrainers.com>

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<http://www.meta-nlp.co.uk>

<http://www.Qdreams.com>

<http://www.rawilson.com>

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## THE SOCIETY OF NLP™

Richard Bandler Licensing Agreement

The Society of Neuro-Linguistic Programming™ is set up for the purpose of exerting quality control over those training programs, services, and materials claiming to represent the model of Neuro- Linguistic Programming™ (NLP™). The seal above indicates Society Certification and is

usually advertised by Society-approved trainers. When you purchase NLP™ products and seminars, ask to see this seal. This is your guarantee of quality.

It is common experience for many people when they are introduced to NLP™ and first begin to learn the technology, to be cautious and concerned with the possible uses and misuses.

As a protection for you and for those around you, the Society of NLP™ now requires participants to sign a licensing agreement which guarantees that those certified in this technology will use it with the highest integrity. It is also a way to ensure that all the trainings you attend are of the highest quality and that your trainers are updated and current with the constant evolution of the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming™ and Design Human Engineering™, etc.

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## **The Society of Medical NLP™**

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and effective breakthroughs in the field of applied psychology. Described as “the study of excellence”, it is also widely used in sports, business and personal development.

Medical NLP™ is a growing field, developing out of Dr Richard Bandler’s work and associated research and clinical practice, and designed for health professionals of all specialties by Garner Thomson and the Society of Medical NLP™. Since NLP focuses on the structure of subjective

experience—“how” something is done, rather than “why”—Medical NLP seeks to understand non-verbal and somatic language (the felt sense), as well as the semantic value of the spoken word of the patient: what is meant vs. what is said—unconscious as well as conscious communication—to create a true language of healing and health.

Medical NLP provides a working model and series of skill-sets, embedded into a proprietary three-stage consultation process that has been demonstrated significantly to enhance the success of all aspects of the patient-doctor interaction. Decoding and using patients’ preferred verbal and non-verbal communication styles gives us clues to their own experience of illness and health. Medical NLP explores patients’ own models of their illness, including the structure of limiting beliefs—for example, how they think the drugs work. This allows us to use their unique paradigms and presuppositions to build a resourceful “consulting state”. This helps both with negotiating an agreed outcome and orientating them towards, and facilitating, recovery.

In addition, Medical NLP provides practical skills to help deal with stress-related problems, benefiting the patients, as well as helping health professionals attend to their own physical and emotional “housekeeping”.

The Society of Medical NLP’s Training Director, Garner Thomson, has delivered talks and certified trainings—now widely accredited for inclusion in a number of continuing professional development plans—to hundreds of doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, physical therapists, medical students, managers and allied health professionals from throughout the United Kingdom and abroad.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**





**RICHARD BANDLER**, co-creator and developer of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, is arguably the world's most influential contributor to the field of self-development and applied psychology. His books have sold more than half a million copies, and tens of thousands of people have studied his unique blend of hypnosis, linguistics, and precise thinking throughout the world.

A widely acclaimed keynote speaker and workshop leader, he is the author of many books, including *Get the Life You Want*, *Richard Bandler's Guide to Trance-formation*, *Using Your Brain—For a Change*, *Time for a Change* and *Magic in Action*. He co-authored *Conversations*, *Frogs into Princes*, *Persuasion Engineering*, *The Structure of Magic I*, *The Structure of Magic II*, *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson Volumes I and II*, and *Neuro-Linguistic Programming Volume I*.

Dr Bandler's background as a musician and his interest in the relationship between sound and neural functioning has led him to develop *Neuro-Sonics™*, and a range of programs for the *BrainFit™* light-sound machine, both of which utilize music and sound to create specific internal experiences and behavioral outcomes. He is also the founder of the mental technologies of *Design Human Engineering (DHE)* and *Neuro-Hypnotic Repatterning (NHR)*.

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**GARNER THOMSON**, NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer, is the founder and training director of the Society of Medical NLP, and the creator of the Medical NLP program, a field developed out of the work of Dr Richard Bandler. He has taught to doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, allied health professionals and medical students since 1996.

A long-time student and associate of Dr. Bandler's, he has a background in psychology, communications, Ericksonian hypnotherapy and trans-cultural and integrative health-care approaches that spans more than 30 years. He also runs a busy Medical NLP and Hypnotherapy practice in London, mostly by referral from doctors in primary and secondary care.

Garner Thomson writes and lectures widely, and appears on radio and television, both as presenter and guest. He is the author of *Magic in Practice, Introducing Medical NLP—The Art and Science of Language in Healing and Health* and is editor of *Richard Bandler's Guide to Trance-formation*.

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